

Maria Louise Jones -
Rockingham House
Portsmouth.

Miss Emily Smith
Dear Miss Smith
I have just received
your letter of the 10th
and am glad to hear
from you. I am well
and hope these few lines
will find you the same.
I have not much news
to write at present.
I am, dear Miss Smith,
Very truly yours,
Emily Smith

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THE

HEIRESS OF GREENHURST.

DAUGHTER OF
CALIFORNIA

In Autobiography.

BY ~~MRS.~~ ANN S. STEPHENS,

AUTHOR OF "FASHION AND FAMINE," "THE OLD HOMESTEAD," ETC., ETC.

NEW YORK:

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DEDICATION.

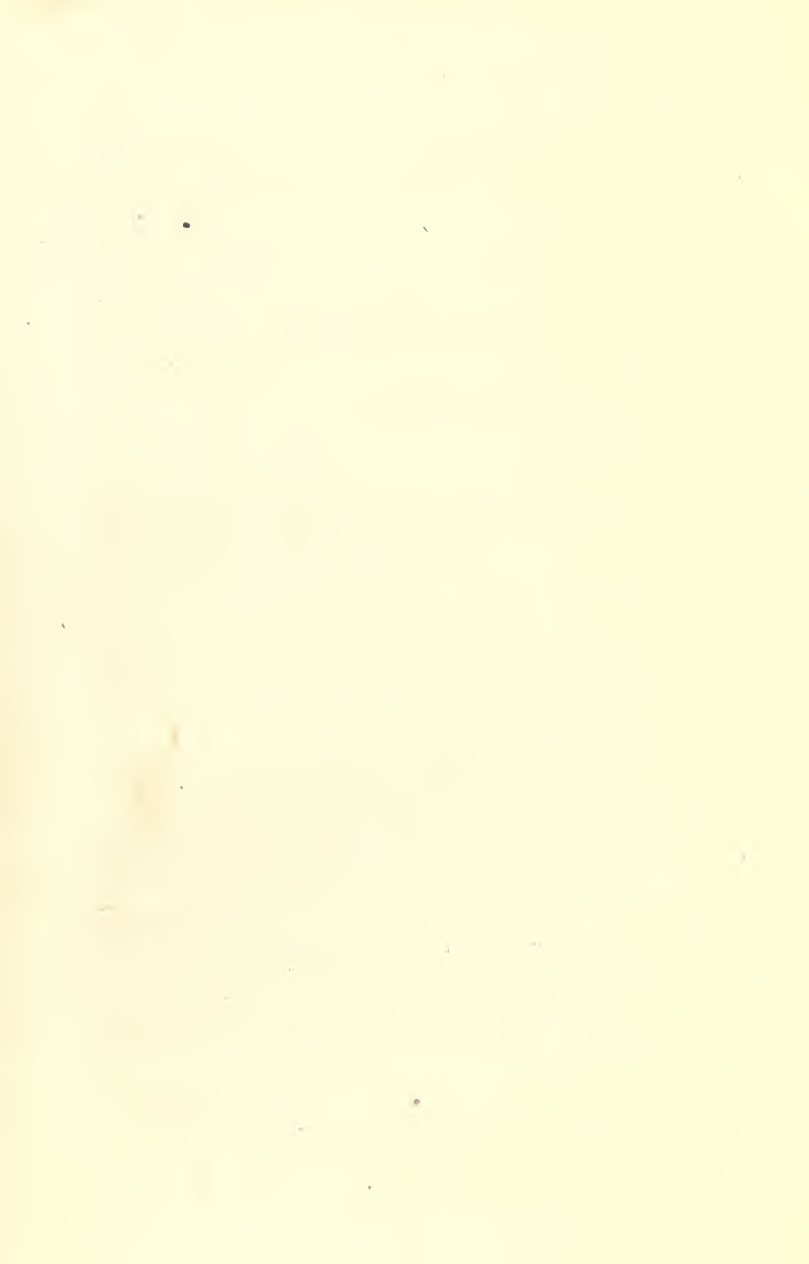
MY MOTHER:

In dedicating this book to you, I have no choice of words; the memories of a helpless and feeble childhood crowd too closely on my heart for that. From the day when you received me an infant from the arms of a dying sister, down to the calm twilight of your own most useful life, I have a remembrance only of more than motherly kindness and entire affection. My childhood and my youth, with all their joys and tender griefs, are so beautifully blended with thoughts of your household virtues and maternal love, that it is impossible to realize that even partial orphanage was ever known to me.

I once hoped to blend with yours the name of that honored father, who has but lately laid down the burden of almost fourscore years and ten, and gone forth from the faithful affection which surrounded him here, to the more perfect love of heaven. But my father is dead, and in the holy welcome of angels the voice of his own child is hushed. Still, through the golden chain of your love, my mother, this dedication shall yet reach him. With you—who made his old age tranquil almost as the heaven he approached, who went faithfully down to the valley of the shadow of death, giving him up only to the angels that waited there—I leave this homage, that it may be conveyed to him through your nightly prayers.

ANN S. STEPHENS.

NEW YORK, *May*, 1857.



THE HEIRESS OF GREENHURST.

CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST GIFT.

It is my mother's story that I am about to write—the story of her young life, her wrongs, her sufferings, and the effects of those wrongs, those sharp sufferings as they flowed in fire and tears through my own existence. Her history ran like a destiny through my own. My life is but a prolongation of hers. I have but done what she would have accomplished, had she not been trampled down like a broken flower, in the civilized life with which none of her blood or race could hope to mingle and live.

She was a gipsy of Granada. You may search for her birth-place among the caves that perforate the hill-side to the right, as you gaze down upon Granada from the Alhambra. That hill, honeycombed with subterranean dwellings, and its bosom swarming with human beings, was my mother's home. Beggars—yes, call them so—a people born to delude and prey upon all other races, these were her companions. She was a gipsy of the pure blood, not a drop, not a taint had ever mingled with the fiery life that glowed in her veins.

Men call me beautiful. And so I am. But compared to my

mother, as I remember her, that which I possess is but the light of a star as it pales into the morning, contrasted with the same bright jewel of the sky, when it burns pure and undimmed in the purple of the evening. I have, it is true, eyes like hers, long, black, almond shaped ; but English blood has thrown a soft mistiness upon their lightning. My cheeks have a rich bloom ; but hers were of a deeper and more peachy crimson, glowing out through the soft creamy tint of her complexion with a warmth that shames comparison. See, I can shake down my hair, and it falls over me like a mantle rolling in heavy black waves far below my waist ; but hers swept to the ground. I have seen her bury her tiny foot in the extremity of those raven curls, and press them to the earth while she stood upright, without straightening a single tress. As for her person, you could liken it to nothing of human beauty. An antelope—a young leopardess, an Arab steed of the pure blood—these were the comparisons that flashed to the mind as you watched the movements of that lithe form—those delicate and slender limbs. Imagine, if you can, a being like this, wild as a bird—utterly untamed, her veins burning with that lava fire that seems caught from another world, her every movement an inspiration. Imagine this creature at fourteen years of age roaming beneath the old trees that lie at the foot of the Alhambra, and earning a scant subsistence with her castanets, and her native dance, from the few foreigners who brave the discomforts of Spanish travel to visit the Alhambra.

She was always among those beautiful old trees, haunting them like the birds for shelter and subsistence. Sometimes you might have found her crouching beneath a thicket half asleep, and dreamily listening to the silvery flow of a hundred concealed rivulets, introduced by the Moors into these shady walks. Sometimes she would lie for hours on the banks of the river that flows through the outskirts of these woods, and weave garlands from the wild blossoms so abundant there, crowning herself like a May Queen, and using the waters for a mirror, the only one she had yet seen. But in all this seeming idleness

she was ever upon the alert, listening for the sound of wheels, peering through the trees for a view of any chance traveller that might ascend to the ruins on foot ; in short, feverish with anxiety to earn bread for her old grandmother, who waited hungrily for it in the caves that yawned upon her from the opposite hill.

One day, when my mother was a little less than fourteen, full-grown as most females of that age are in Spain, yet delicate and slender as I have described, she had come to the Alhambra woods with two or three gipsy girls of her tribe, but wandered away alone as was her habit, searching for wild flowers to compose a garland for her hair. Down in a little hollow that sinks abruptly from the broad avenue leading to the Alhambra, she found a profusion of these sweet stars of the wood, and began to gather them in handfuls, forming a drapery from her scant calico robe, and filling it with the fragrant mass in pleasant wantonness, for she had collected blossoms enough to crown half Granada.

She sat down on the ground, and selecting the most dewy buds, began to weave them into a wreath, blending the tints with a degree of taste that would have been pronounced artistic in civilized life. Red, yellow, purple with delicate and starry white blossoms, all flashed through her little hands, blending themselves, as it were, by magic into this rustic crown. Now and then she paused and held the garland up admiringly with a smile upon her lips, and her graceful head turned on one side, half shyly, like a bird's, as if she were ashamed of admiring her own work.

Her castanets lay upon the grass, and stretching one little naked foot, plump as an infant's, down to the rivulet that flowed by her, she began to dip it up and down in the sparkling water, carelessly as a bird laves itself in the morning. As the waters rippled over that little foot, breaking up in diamond drops all around, she continued her sweet task, leaning on one side, or bending backward now and then to gather some green sprig or fresh bud that grew within reach.

My poor, poor mother—how little could she guess that the moment so full of sweet repose, while the waters sung and whispered to her as they passed, while the blossoms breathed balm all around, gratifying her senses and her delicate taste at the same moment—how could she guess that moment to be one of destiny to her, the single speck of time on which all her after life depended !

She kept on with her pretty garlands, blending with unconscious taste, a little delicate green, and a few white bells with the rich clusters of crimson, yellow, and blue that predominated there.

When it was finished, she withdrew her foot from the water, that it might not disturb the pure surface—watched the bubbles with a smile as they floated downward, and, bending over the rivulet, wreathed her garland among the rich folds of hair which I have mentioned as so glossy and abundant.

A knot of scarlet ribbon—I know not how obtained, but it was her only finery, poor thing—fastened this floral crown ; and after arranging her dress of many-colored chintz, she regarded herself in the water for an instant with smiling admiration. And well she might, for the image thrown back by that tranquil pool was full of picturesque beauty, unlike anything you ever dreamed of even in romance.

A slight noise, something rustling among the neighboring foliage, made her start from that graceful half-stooping position. She looked eagerly around—and there, upon the upper swell of the bank, stood a young man looking at her.

My poor mother had no thought but of the coin she might earn. A cry of glad surprise broke from her lips, and seizing her castanets she sprang from amid the litter of wild flowers that had fallen around her feet, and with a single bound stood before the stranger, poising herself for the national dance.

I cannot tell what it was, but some strange magnetic influence possessed my mother. As her slender limbs were prepared for the first graceful bound, her spirited ankle

strained back, and one little foot just ready to spurn the turf, a wonderful fascination came over her. She stood a moment immovable, frozen into that graceful attitude, her eyes fixed upon the stranger's, her red lips parted in a half smile, checked and still as her limbs. Then the eyelids, with their long, thick lashes, began to quiver, and drooped heavily downward, veiling the fire of those magnificent eyes. The tension slowly left her muscles, and with the castanets hanging loose in her hands, she drooped languidly toward the youth, as a flower bends on its stalks when the sunshine is too warm.

He addressed her in English, but, though she did not understand his words, the very sound of his voice made her shiver from head to foot. He spoke again and smiled pleasantly, not as men smile with their lips alone, but with a sort of heart-bloom spreading all over the face. She looked up, and knew that he was asking her to dance; but she, whose muscles up to that moment had answered to her will, as harp-strings obey the master-touch, found all her power gone. She could not even lift her eyes to meet the admiring glance bent upon her, but shrunk timidly, awkwardly—if a creature so full of native grace could be awkward—away, and burst into tears.

That instant there came leaping up from a neighboring hollow, the half dozen gipsy girls that my mother had forsaken in the woods. On they came like a troop of young antelopes, leaping, singing, rattling their castanets, and surrounding the stranger with smiles, gestures, and sounds of eager glee.

He looked around, surprised and smiling. The scene took him unawares. His heart was brimful of that sweet romance that hovers forever like a spirit about the place, and this picturesque exhibition startled him into enthusiasm. It was like enchantment. The wild poetry of the past acted before him. His dark grey eyes grew brilliant with excitement. He smiled, nay, even laughed gaily, scattering silver among the troop of dark-browed fairies that had beset his way. There was something eager and grasping in the manner of

these girls as they scrambled for the money, pushing each other aside with lightning flashes of the eye, and searching avariciously among the grass when all had been gathered up.

You could see that the young man was very fastidious from the effect this had upon him. A look of disappointment, tinged with contempt, swept the happy expression from his face ; and when they began a new dance, less modest than the preceding, he motioned them to desist. But they were not to be driven away ; he had been too liberal for that. They drew back a little, but continued to dance, some moving around him on the avenue, others choosing the turfy bank. Still he beckoned them to desist, but misunderstanding his gestures, they became subdued, threw a more voluptuous spirit into the dance, and the languor that tamed down each movement seemed a portion of the balmy atmosphere, so subtle and enervating was the effect.

But the stranger was no ordinary man. The very efforts that would have charmed others, created a singular feeling of repulsion in him. He turned from the dancing girls with a look of weariness, and would have moved on ; but disappointed in the result of the last effort, they sprang into his path like so many bacchantes, making the soft air vibrate with the rapidity and force of their movements. Half clothed—for the garments of these young creatures reached but little below the knees, their slender limbs and small, naked feet exposed in the wild frenzy of their exertions, eager as wild animals who have tasted blood—they beset his way with bolder and more desperate attempts to charm forth a new supply of coin.

In the midst of this wild scene, the young man chanced to turn his eyes upon my mother. She was standing apart, not drooping helplessly as at first, but upright, spirited, with a curve of invincible scorn upon those red lips, and a blush glowing like fire over every visible part of her person. For the first time in her life, she seemed to be aroused to the character of her national dance : for the first time in her life the young gipsy had learned to blush.

The Englishman was struck by her appearance, and made an effort to draw near, but his wild tormentors followed close, and, to free himself, he adroitly flung a handful of small coin far up the avenue. Away sprang the whole group, shouting, leaping, and hustling each other about, as they cleared the distance between themselves and the Englishman.

He approached my mother with a little reluctance, such as a man feels when he tries a new language, and uttered a few words in Spanish.

"Why do you remain behind? There is money up yonder," he said.

My mother looked up. The tears which she had suppressed still sparkled on her curling eyelashes.

"I do not want money," she said; "I have done nothing to earn it."

"And why did you not dance with the rest?"

"I don't know. It seems to me now that I never have danced like them, and yet, I tried to begin that very dance—tried and could not."

The blush again burned on her face. She made a movement as if to cover it with her hands, and desisted, ashamed of her new-born modesty.

"And why could you not dance for me as you have for others?"

"I do not know."

"You have already earned money enough?"

"I have an old grandmother who has not tasted food to-day. She is waiting in patient hunger till I shall bring money from the woods to purchase it. My companions will carry food to their parents—mine must wait."

"See, I have driven these people away. They did not please me, but you shall give me a dance while they are busy. Here is a piece of good English gold, which will supply your grandame with food during the next fortnight."

My mother took the gold and examined it with great curiosity. She had never seen so much money at once in her life.

"I—I am to dance before you, and this will be mine?" she said, at last.

"Yes, it will be yours!"

She handed him back the money, took up her castanets, and stepped forth with a sort of haughty grace. Giving her person a willowy bend sideways, she began, the tears starting afresh to her eyes as she made the effort. But the elasticity seemed to have forsaken her limbs: she stopped abruptly and retreated.

"I will not go on," she said; "I don't want the piece of gold; I only know the dances that made you drive my companions away."

There was no acting in this. My poor mother literally could not perform her task, and it was this very failure that charmed the young Englishman. Had she earned the money it would have been given, and she possibly remembered no more; as it was—ah, would to heaven she had earned it—earned it and gone on her way true to her people—true to the blood that never mingles with that of another race without blending a curse with it.

But there was something in my mother's refusal that interested the Englishman. He was very young, only in his twenty-fourth year, but of mature intellect and strong of mind. Still the fresh and romantic delicacy of youth clung to his feelings. They were both fresh and powerful. The ideal blended with all things. He could never have been a slave to the mere senses, but sensation excited, his poetical nature made even that exquisite. He was not a man to indulge in light fancies, but his imagination and his feelings were both strong, and in these lay the danger.

Love is the religion of a woman educated as my mother had been. In her it seemed like apostasy from the true faith to allow her heart a moment's resting-place out of her own race. Indeed, she deemed it an impossibility, and thus secure, was all unconscious of the fatal passion that had transformed her very nature in a single morning.

Not half an hour had elapsed since my mother had met

the stranger. The dew that trembled on her coronal of wild blossoms still glittered there ; the first footprint she had made upon the grass that morning still kept its place. Yet how much time it has required for me to give you an idea of the feelings that grew into strength in that brief time—feelings that vibrated through more than one generation, that made me what I am ; for this man was my father.

Be patient, and I will tell you more ; for there lies a long history between that time and this, the history of many persons ; for did I not say that my life was but a continuation of hers ? And I have known much, felt much, suffered. But who that has known and felt, can say that he has not suffered ?

“Nay, you have fairly earned the gold,” said the Englishman, bending his now bright and earnest eyes on my mother, with an expression that made every nerve in her body thrill, as if it had been touched to music for the first time—“take it for your grandam’s sake, my poor child !”

What charm possessed my mother ? She who had been among the most eager when money was to be obtained—why did she shrink and blush at taking the gold from that generous palm ? Why, when she happened to touch his hand in receiving it, did the warm blood leap to each finger’s end, till the delicately curved nails seemed red with some artificial dye ? The gold gave her no pleasure at first. It seemed a sacrilege to receive it from him ; but after a little it grew precious as her own life. Her grandmother went hungry to bed that night, for the gipsy girl would not part with this one piece of gold. She did not even acknowledge to any one that it had been given her, but hid it away close to her heart, and kept it there through many a sharp struggle that broke that poor heart at last. I have it in my bosom. It was necessary at times that I should feel it grating cold and hard, or something of tenderness would have crept there. I could not have gone through with all that I had to accomplish but for this gold—gold, gold. It is a fine thing to harden the heart with ; in many ways men have found it so.

My mother took the money, then, with a faint blush and a smile that lighted up his face into absolute beauty, the young man said,

"I see you hesitate ; you will not believe the money is fairly earned. Now to set you at rest I will take the wreath you wear as full compensation. It will remind me hereafter of my first day at the Alhambra."

My mother smiled, and her face kindled up with the pleasure his request had given. She unbound the wreath and presented it to him, ribbon and all.

That ribbon was the only ornament that she had in the world, but she parted with it joyfully ; though the diamonds that Queen Isabella sacrificed to Christopher Columbus were not half so precious to their owner as this scarlet snood had been to the gipsy girl.

I have the ribbon too. That piece of gold is suspended to it about my neck—the first gift of my mother—the first gift of my father. He wore the ribbon around his neck at the death-hour. The gold also ; alas ! it was an awful hour when that piece of gold was laid in my palm.

The Englishman lingered for weeks at the Alhambra. He lived at a little Fonda that stands close beneath the ruins, sometimes spending whole days among the old Moorish remains, at others wandering thoughtfully beneath the stately trees.

My mother had spent her life in those woods. She could not change her habits now, for the love of those cool shadows had become a want of her whole being ; but she danced the gipsy dances and sung the gipsy songs no more. Her companions wondered greatly at this, and triumphed over her with a wild glee that would have roused her indignation a few weeks before. Now, she turned from them with a quiet curve of scorn upon her lip, and stole away by herself, weaving garlands, and listening to the hidden waters that chimed their sweet voices in the solitude, whispering a thousand dreamy fancies, which deepened almost into sadness as time wore on.

I know not how often she saw the Englishman during that period. Not very frequently, I am sure ; for she had become timid as a fawn, and would sit crouching among the thickets for hours, only to see him pass distantly through the dim veil of the forest leaves.

Night after night she went home from the woods empty-handed, and musing as if in a dream. Her grandame chided her sharply at times, for hunger made her stern. The gipsy girl bore this with surprising meekness, weeping gently, but never urging a word in her own defence, save that she did not know why, but it was impossible to dance as she had done ; the strength left her limbs whenever she attempted it.

A week—more than one—went by, and the gipsy girl remained in this inactive, dreamy state. Then a sudden change came over her. She grew animated, the wild passions of her nature kindled up again. You could see that her heart slept no longer. The dove that had brooded there so sweetly had taken wing. She went to the Alhambra early. She left it sometimes after dark, often bringing a little money which she gave the old woman with trembling hands and downcast eyes, that were frequently full of tears.

At this season you could not have looked upon her face without admiration. The bloom upon the sunniest peach suffered in comparison with the rich hues of her cheek. Her eyes were starry in their brightness. You could not speak to her without bringing a smile to her mouth, that brightened it as the sunshine glows upon ripe strawberries. If tears sometimes started beneath these thick lashes, they only served to light up the eyes they could not dim, for every bright drop seemed to leap from a blissful source.

She was quiet though, and said little. You only knew how exquisite was her happiness by the glorious beauty of her face.

Then, all this exquisite joy went gradually out, as you see a lamp fade when the perfume oil burns low. She wept no more blissful tears. Her smile grew constrained, and took a

marble paleness. It was singular that no one observed this ; that the keen-eyed people of her tribe never suspected what was going on in that young heart—but so it was.

One person of the tribe would not have been thus blinded ; for he loved the gipsy girl as only the wild, strong nature of the pure blood can love ; but he had gone to attend the annual fair at Seville, and my mother was left to the tempter and her own heart. Much that passed during this time remains a mystery even to me, her child, for in the manuscript that she left, there is hesitation, embarrassment—many erasures and whole sentences blotted out, as if no language could satisfy her—or, as if there existed much that she could not force herself to write. Still, she seemed to linger about this period as if afraid to go on. It was her first love-dream ; how could she describe it ? Her first step in the crooked way which no human being can possibly make straight. How could she describe that to her own child ? Still, much was written, much revealed, that I shall put into form. For my mother was a child of the Alhambra, and there her destiny commenced shaping itself into a fate.

CHAPTER II.

THE SIBYL'S CAVE.

I have spoken of the grandame who was my mother's only relative. I have a sort of fierce pride in this old woman, and love to trace the Rommany blood that burns in my own heart, back to that weird source ; for in her withered veins it grew, like old wine, strong with age and bitter with the hate which our people bore to the Gentiles.

Learned men still cavil about our origin. They gather up scraps of our language, they ferret out our habits, and torture

our tradition to establish the various theories, which, after all, must remain theories ; for ours is a poverty-stricken people. We have no possession, not even a history. They call us a nation of thieves, and say that even our traditions are stolen. Be it so ! at least we are faithful to each other, a boast which the brotherhood of civilization cannot honestly make.

But though wise men have traced us back to Judea, and made us worshippers of idols, we who worship nothing in heaven or on earth, know by the secret sympathies that link us together—sympathies which no Gentile can comprehend—that the blood within our hearts is of another source than the idolaters of Judea.

They say that our traditions are stolen from your Bible ; that from the solemn prophecies written there, we have gathered up a belief in our Egyptian origin. But my great grandmother never looked into your Bible. She would have trampled the falsehood under her feet and spit upon it, had any one hinted that in the Gentile language, lay the great secret of her race.

But her faith in the Egyptian descent of our people was like a religion. How it came to her, whether from tradition, fable, fact, or those sorcerers' arts that made her famous among all our nation, I do not know. Save in those wild sympathies that knit our tribe together, as with bonds of iron, all over the earth, our people have no history. They came like a cloud of locusts sweeping down from the East. It may be one of the curses sent forth to infest the earth after ravaging Egypt. It may be a fragment of the lost tribes. It may be even, as some of our traditions say, that we were sent forth as a punishment for inhospitality to the mother of God and her holy child. There is a wide field for conjecture. Let your wise men guess on. With us, our Egyptian descent is a faith—all the religion that we have !

I know many languages, am learned in historic lore—learned in the great foundation of all history, the Bible. Of that which pertains to my people I have studied long and deeply ; yet as my great grandmother, the Gitana, believed, so do I. To her

occult wisdom, her subtle sympathies, I have brought all the knowledge to be gathered from the literature of other races.

I have searched your sacred book till my soul has been stirred to its depths with the dark prophecies that foreshadow the scattering of our tribes over the face of the earth. I find the destiny that is now upon us written out in that great book, certain, unmistakable as the thunder-cloud that heralds in a tempest. There is wisdom in that book. Our people should know it better, for much of its grandeur came from Egypt, as we did—Egypt the great mother of learning—the land which gave its wisdom to Moses, and taught the irresolute how to think, act, and suffer.

And we too are of Egypt. Does the Gentile want proof? Let him search for it in the prophecies that he holds sacred. Let him read it in the voluptuous character of our dances, in the unwritten poetry, unwritten because it grows tame and mean in any language but the Rommany. The Gitanos speak their poetry as it swells warm from the heart, for it would grow cold in the writing. Let him search for it where he pleases. We require no proof, better than the mysterious spirit within us. Our hearts turn back to the old land, and we know that it once belonged to us.

My great grandame was no common Gitana. Her husband had been a chief, or count, among the gipsies, during his entire manhood. This was no common dignity, for our people choose their own leaders, and it is seldom that one man's popularity lasts during a life-time. The Gitano chooses his wife for her talent, her art, her powers of deception; in short, for what you would call her keen wickedness. These are the endowments that recommend the Gitana bride to her lord. It was for these qualities, joined to talents that would have given her a position in any nation, that my ancestor married his wife.

This great grandame of mine was bravely descended, and richly endowed. Talent descends most frequently from the mother, and through the female line she could trace her blood back to that arch sorceress, who wound herself around Maria

de Padilla, during her heroic life, and in the end betrayed that noble woman to death, when she fled from Toledo with her son.

Maria de Padilla had offended our ancestress, and she was true to her hate. My great grand-dame wore a pair of earrings, massive gold circlets set with great rubies. In her poverty—for in the end she became very poor—these antique ornaments were always about her person. No amount of suffering, no temptation could win them from her, even for a moment. These antique rings had been wrested from the heroine of Toledo, on the night when she *disappeared* with her Gitana attendant. There was a tradition, that the precious stones with which they were beset, had once been white, but that after the murder, had changed to the blood-red hue which they ever after maintained. I know not how this superstition took birth; but the craft of our Gitana ancestress seemed to descend with the rings, as they came down from that wonderful creature, always through the females, to the old Sibyl who was the grandame of my mother.

I know that the Gitanos are considered as impostors; that they are supposed to practise their arts for coarse gain, and for that only; but this is not always true. No devotee ever put more faith in her saint than the gipsy, who has long exercised her powers of divination, places in the truth of her mysterious art.

It was late in the evening, and old Papita—for thus my ancestress was named—sat in her cave-home waiting the return of her grand-daughter from the Alhambra. Perhaps upon the whole earth there is nothing more repulsive than a very old woman in any portion of southern Europe. The voluptuous atmosphere, the warm sunshine that matures female life so early, seems to mock its own precocious work, by proving how hideous time can render it. But if age makes itself so repulsive among the luxurious women of Spain, those who scarcely draw a breath of that delicious atmosphere which is not heavy with fragrance, how much more hideous must be the old age of

a Gitana hid away in the dark hollows of the earth, with rude and insufficient food, clothed in rags, uncared for, held in no higher repute than the foxes who burrow in the earth like themselves, and are scarcely held apart from civilization more than they are ?

There was something witch-like in the appearance of my great grandame as she sat alone in her cave that night. A meagre candle shed its light in sickly flickers around a rude niche scooped in the rock, from whence the entire dwelling was cut. The body of this light fell upon the old woman's head, kindling up a scarlet kerchief that she wore, somewhat in the fashion of a Moorish turban, into vivid brilliancy ; but casting the rough features into blacker shadow, till they seemed meagre, dark, and almost as withered as those of an Egyptian mummy. Her claw-like hands were folded over her bosom, and a ring set with some deep green stone cut with Egyptian characters, caught the light like a star ; for the setting was of rough massive gold, that seemed heavy enough to break the withered finger, that it covered from joint to joint. A few embers lay upon the stone floor at her feet, the remnants of a fire that had burned low, leaving a thin cloud of smoke still floating in the vaulted roof of the cave.

A low chair of heavy carved wood, the antique plunder of some religious house, served the old woman for a seat ; and before her, upon the embers, stood a small bronze vessel, which gave forth a soft odor as its contents simmered sleepily in the dying heat.

Besides these objects, there was little of interest in the dwelling. The cave was scooped from the soft sandstone cliff that forms one side of a ravine, through which the Darro passes before making its graceful sweep around the Alhambra. The walls and ceiling were blended together in a thousand irregular curves and angles, roughly chiselled, and blackened over with smoke. It had no particular form ; but sunk into recesses ; was cut up into hollows ; bulged out in places that

should have been corners, and had a dozen angles that promised some definite form, but failed in the performance.

In size it might have covered eighteen or twenty square feet. The floors were of stone, like the walls, for all was cut from one rock ; but smoke and long use had so disguised the native material, that it could hardly be guessed at. A few dried herbs were hung in one hollow of the wall ; an earthen pot, full of fresh flowers, stood in another ; some specimens of coarse pottery occupied a shelf opposite the door, and cooking utensils of heavy iron were huddled in a corner, making the shadows in that portion of the cave still more dense.

The old Sibyl arose, took down the candle, and holding it over the bronze vessel peered into it, muttering to herself. Now the dark mummy-like aspect of her features changed ; the eyes, black, firm and large, for age had no power to quench their lightning, illuminated those withered features and gave expression to every wrinkle. Her thin lips parted, and through a weird smile, that made them writhe like disturbed serpents, shot the gleam of her sharp, long teeth, white as ivory, and strong as those of a tiger.

My great grandame in her youth was of middle size ; but age had contracted her muscles and warped her sinews, leaving her limbs spare and lean till she was scarcely larger than a child of twelve years. Her head was singularly large, the forehead heavy, the eyes under it burning like coals of living fire ; and this disproportion was exaggerated by the heavy red kerchief that I have already spoken of.

As the old woman lifted her person from its stooping position and rose upright, you wondered that she had power in those withered limbs to stand so erect, or carry the weight of that heavy blue saya, with its succession of crimson flounces all edged with golden lace, from which the brightness had departed years ago. You wondered, too, at the picturesque and singular arrangement of colors in her dress. It is true the old velvet jacket had lost all traces of its original lustre. The colors of the saya were dimmed and worn away ; but the vestige of

former dignity was there, and no age could injure that mystic seal, or the massive ruby rings that bent her thin ears with their weight, and flashed like great drops of blood falling from beneath her kerchief.

Two or three times the grandame waved her light over the bronze vessel, then thrusting the candle back into its niche, with an air of discontent she walked to the door of her cave, flung it open and looked out.

At first she held one hand over her eyes as we do when the sun strikes us suddenly, and no wonder, for what a contrast was that beautiful night with the black hole she had left !

I have seen the Alhambra by moonlight, from the very point of view which the old Sibyl commanded, and it is one of the memories which one would give up years of life rather than surrender. Down from the soft purple of that glorious sky fell the moonlight, pouring its rich luminous floods over the snows that lie forever upon the noble mountain ranges of the Alpujarras. It cast a silvery halo around each snowy peak, making the whiteness lustrous as noonday, then came quivering down their sides, and fell in a silvery torrent among the groves that girdle the Alhambra. There, subdued and softened by the masses of foliage, it divided a sweet empire with the night, leaving half those dim old towers to the shadows, and pouring its whole refulgence upon the rest, throwing a glory over some broken arch, and abandoning its neighbor to obscurity.

Ah me, there is nothing on earth so beautiful as the moonlight shining amid a grim old ruin like that. It is the present smiling away the gloom of the past.

Broken up, as it were, by those naked old towers, the light fell among the groves, throwing the trees out in masses that took a greenish hue almost as if it had been day ; then the foliage became dense, and long shadows cast themselves like a dewy vapor down the hill, admitting soft gleams to flicker in here and there, like a network of pearls embroidering the darkness. Then, as if some under-current of light had been all the while flowing on beneath the trees, out rushed the moonbeams

breaking away from the shadows, and pouring down upon the bosom of the Darro, smiling, sparkling, kindling up every drop of water as it flowed by, till you would have thought some hidden vein in the mountains had broken free, and a torrent of diamonds were sweeping between Granada and its Moorish fortress.

It is possible that the old gipsy saw nothing of this. I am inclined to think that she did not, for the scene had become familiar to her, and that night she was ill at ease. Instead of turning her gaze as you would have done upon the Alhambra and the snow ridges beyond, she threw her head back, and began peering among the stars, muttering to herself in some strange tongue, and holding up her mystic ring as if to catch direct fire from the particular star to which her eyes were uplifted.

“Not now,” she said fiercely ; for the least untoward thing awoke the old woman’s wrath ; and even then she longed to gather all that beautiful moonlight up, and cast it into some dark void, because its refulgence dimmed the stars which she wished to read. “Not now,” she muttered, locking her sharp teeth together, and turning her fierce eyes upon the sky with a gleam of hate—“not while the moon is wading through the snows up yonder, and putting out the bright, beautiful stars till the heavens all run together like the printed pages of a book which one has not the art to read. Not yet, not yet. I must wait till the skies are purple again, and the stars come out with fire in them. The moon, the moon, it is the friend of the Busne, never of the Gitana. Accursed be its path in the sky. May the stars, that have a language for the Egyptian, grow powerful, and smite it down from its high place.”

After uttering this weird curse, the Sibyl closed the door and slunk back into her cave, pacing to and fro, and crooning over a wild snatch of song that seemed to excite rather than soothe the fierce mood she was in.

CHAPTER III.

CHALECO AND HIS PLUNDER.

ALL at once the old woman drew in her breath with a hiss, and bent her eyes on the door. She heard a footstep approach. The wooden lock moved, and a man perhaps of twenty-three or four years old presented himself.

It was many years since the old Sibyl had been known to change countenance, or the unpleasant surprise that seized her at the sight of this man must have been visible. Yet of all his tribe he might have been deemed a welcome guest in any cave in the settlement, for he was a count or chief among the gipsies of Granada, and added to this, was the betrothed husband of Aurorâ, the grandchild of Papita.

Why then should the old woman shrink within herself and receive Chaleco, the chief of her tribe, with so much inward trepidation? I only know that, dazzled as her eyes had been by the moonlight, she had read enough in the stars to make her afraid of meeting Chaleco.

The young count had all those strongly marked characteristics that distinguish his race: a clear olive complexion; heavy voluptuous lips, revealing teeth that shamed the whitest ivory; hair black and coarse, but, in his case, with a purple lustre upon it; eyes of vivid blackness, and cheek bones slightly; in him, very slightly prominent, all lighted up by an expression of great strength, sharpness, cunning and perseverance—that is, these passions must have been visible in his countenance had he ever allowed one true feeling to speak in his face. His dress alone would have bespoken his position in the tribe to one accustomed to the habits of our people, still it did not entirely appertain to the portion of the country to which he belonged.

Chaleco had travelled much in Catalonia, and having a rich fancy in costume, adopted many of their picturesque habits of dress. On this evening, he seemed to have arrayed himself with peculiar care, which is easily accounted for when we remember that he had been more than six weeks absent from Granada, and in that time had not seen his betrothed.

With the deep cunning of her race, blended perhaps with a little of the irritation that had preceded his coming, Papita was the first to speak; and taking exception to the Catalonian fashion of his dress, fortified her own position by commencing hostilities before the young man had time to ask questions, which she felt herself unable to answer satisfactorily.

"So, Chaleco, you have come back at last, and more like a stranger than ever. What Busne has bewitched you in the fair at Seville, that you return to Granada in a dress like that?"

"Why, mother, this is all folly. I have but added this cap to the garments that I wore when we went from hence. Surely this is not a thing to provoke your wrath," cried the young man, taking a scarlet cap from his head with that half-shy, half-defying look with which some men receive female criticism on their dress, and grasping it with the heavy tassel of blue silk in his hand—"Aurora will not condemn it so sharply, I dare say."

The mention of this name seemed to embitter the old woman's reply.

"It is a Moorish cap, no true Gitano would wear it," she said, eyeing the unfortunate cap with a contemptuous glance, "and your dress of dark blue velvet embroidered at the neck—pockets with gold upon the seams—silver buttons and tags rattling from their rings—and chains over your bosom like the bells around a mule's neck."

"Nay, you can find no fault with the buttons; they are from the best silver workers of Barcelona," cried the count, flinging open the short dark velvet jacket with sleeves, which he wore hussar fashion over this beautiful dress, and revealing

his whole person with an air of bravado, which the more swarthy color on his temples belied.

The old woman glanced with an expression that she intended to be one of unmingled scorn, upon the embroidered strips of cloth, blue and yellow, that enriched the neck and elbows of the young Gitano's jacket, and allowing her eyes to glance down to his well-turned limbs, terminated her gaze at the sandals laced up to the knee by many-colored ribbons.

The young man followed her glance with a half-shy, half-provoked look.

"At any rate, you cannot find fault with this, or this," he said, drawing her attention to a rich scarf of crimson silk around his waist, and a handkerchief in which many gorgeous colors were blended, that was knotted loosely around his well-formed neck. "I can only remember seeing the gipsy count, your husband, once when I was a boy, but I know well that he wore a dress not unlike this that you revile so, with a scarf and kerchief that might have come from the same loom."

The old Sibyl kindled up like an aged war-horse at the sound of a trumpet—her withered features worked, her sharp eyes dilated, a grim smile crept over her lips.

"Yes, yes, I remember, and it is this that fills my heart with bitterness. He wrested these things from our foes, the Busne. They were his portion of the spoil. He laid many an ambush, and reddened his knife more than once for the frippery which you get in easier ways; for every button that he wore, his people had some gain of their own to show. How is it with you, Chaleco?—how many of our people have been fortunate, that you are tricked out so bravely? How many mules did you shear in Seville, to earn what is upon your back?"

"Aurora would not taunt me so," said the gipsy, with a fierce gesture, "if she did"—

"Well, what then?" rejoined the old woman, sharply, though her fierce eye quailed a little, and a quick ear might have detected something like terror in her voice.

"Why, then," said the young man, "I would send word that

the ton of sweetmeats in which we shall dance knee deep at our marriage festival, should be kept back ; and I would fling this chain of gold, which shall lace up her wedding bodice, into the Darro. It is because you are old and learned—the widow of a great count, that I have borne all these gibes so tamely ; no one else in the tribe should revile me thus. *She* least of all.”

Either the stern tone which the young man assumed, or his praise of her dead husband, softened the austere temper of the old woman. Perhaps it might be the unwonted sight of that gold ornament, or what is most probable, her attack upon the young man had been an artful scheme to gain time till her grand-daughter should appear. Certain it is, her face took an expression less in character than the wrath had been with her weird features. A crafty, sly expression stole into her eyes ; her mouth stirred with a slow smile, moving sluggishly as the worm creeps. She reached out her hand for the chain, and letting it drop to a heap in her palm, bent over it with a look of gloating avarice that would have been hideous to any one but the Gitano, who had witnessed these scenes from his birth.

The old woman looked suddenly up. A fierce light was in her eyes.

“The rings in my ears are red hot ; the chain burns in my palm ; I know the sign ; the Busne has been forced to give up his gold once more. Our people have not altogether sunk down to be mere trimmers of mules and donkeys. You did not work for this, my Chaleco !”

“Hush !” said the gipsy, lifting his finger with a smile, in which terror and triumph was blended, “the Busne may be hanging about our caves. The chain is for Aurora. She shall wear it upon her bosom on our wedding day. But where is she ? Your sharp words have driven her from my mind !”

“No, no, my son, it is well that we are alone ; you have accomplished a great deed—a deed worthy of Aurora’s grandfather, he who has stained many a rood of soil with Busne blood—but times have changed since he roamed the hills with our people. If there was blood—and the gold burns my palm

as if it had been baptized—they will be on our track, hunting you into our holes as they do the foxes. Tell me how it all happened ; my heart burns to hear ; the tidings have filled these old veins as with wine ; I had begun to be ashamed of my people. Sit down, Chaleco, here, on the old chair which *he* took from the choir of their proudest cathedral while the priests were chanting mass. You never sat in it before ; but now that you have reddened your finger nails—warmed my palm with gold that is not worked for, the seat is yours. Sit down, my son, while I draw close, that we may talk !”

The young gipsy sat down, but evidently with some impatience ; and the Sibyl creeping close to his side, placed herself on a low bench, and, bending forward, fixed her glittering eyes on his face.

“ Now,” she said, rubbing her thin hands together, and chafing the chain between them, “ tell me, is this all ? The chief takes one third of the whole, that is the law of the Cales.”

“ No, there was gold, a thousand pieces, packed away upon a mule.”

“ A thousand pieces ! Oh, my son, I saw great luck in the stars for you—but a thousand pieces !—this is wonderful !”

“ Besides, there was a watch with double case, all fine gold, and some rings which were too large for Aurora’s finger, so we buried them in the ground, with the gold and other treasures. Here is something. I am not sure about giving this to her, these glittering things on the back may be of value. I found it hung to the Busne’s neck by the chain ; here is his own face, it may yet bring us into trouble. Look”——

The chief drew a locket from his bosom shaped like a cockle shell. The whole outside was paved with pearls swelling into the several compartments. The scalloped edges were bright with diamonds of great value. He touched a spring, and within this exquisite trinket two miniatures were revealed. One was that of a young man, fair, with a bright, clear complexion, fine eyes of greyish blue, a delicate forehead, pure as

snow in color, and teeming with thought ; a mouth somewhat full, and of deep coral red, with a fair curling beard of rich brown, kindled up by a tinge of gold ; hair a little deeper in tint, but with the same metallic lustre breaking through its heavy waves. This was the face, fair, animated, and lighted up with a beautiful smile, that first presented itself to the old Sibyl's gaze. She arose, took down the candle, and peered over it in silence. The contrast was striking, that tawny, witch-like countenance, and the beautiful shadows smiling out from its bed of jewels.

There was a female portrait on the other side ; but it was that of a woman somewhat older than the youth could have been ; but, though of different complexion, there was one of those indefinite resemblances between the two faces which exist independent of features, running through families, and connecting them in the eyes of the beholder with a subtle influence, as one feels that a rose is near, by the perfume which is itself impalpable.

The Sibyl only glanced at the female face, and turned to that of the young man again with keener interest. You could see by the workings of her face that she was beginning to hate that beautiful shadow ; for there was a terrible gleam in her eye when she closed the shell with a snap, and clutched it in her hand.

"No," she said, sharply, "my grand-daughter shall not wear this thing. The bright sparks are diamonds ; the white ridges are of oriental pearls. But the face is that of the Busne ; it does not belong to Spain either ; hair and eyes of that color come from beyond sea. It is worth more than all your gold or the other trinkets ; but she shall not wear it. I saw a face like this between me and the stars to-night. Was the man you plundered like it ?"

"It was himself ; two faces were never more alike !"

"And your knife, is it red ? Did you leave him in the hills ?"

"No, mother," replied the chief, blushing, as if ashamed.

that he had no crime of blood to confess, "he made no resistance ; we were many, he nearly alone, for the guards fled as we rushed upon them. We did not kill him, there was no reason in it."

"How long was this ago?"

"It was three days after we left Granada!"

"That is almost six weeks—but where?"

"About half way between this and Seville!"

"And did you take the plunder along?"

"We buried it on the spot ; went to the fair as if nothing had happened, and dug it up as we came home."

"And which way went the traveller?"

"We did not wait to see ; his face was toward Granada when we met him ; that is all I can say."

"Go from my sight—you should have killed this viper—he was crawling this way."

"Mother!"

"Go—go, but first let me grind this thing to powder with my foot ; help me to spoil his face ; you can pick up the diamonds from the dirt when I have done stamping on them!"

"No, mother, it is worth money—give it to me!"

The old woman unclutched her hand and flung the trinket against the wall of her cave, where it fell back with a rebound to her feet.

"Leave it," she said, with a fierce laugh, "the thing is accursed—leave it and go."

"Not till I have seen Aurora," said the young man, looking wistfully at the jewel. "It is late, very late, she must be yonder in her nest, ashamed to come forth without a bidding from her betrothed. Step aside, mother, I have waited too long."

The young chief strode forward as he spoke, and touching a door which was half concealed behind the old woman's chair, flung it open, revealing, by the light that stood in its niche close by, an inner room, in which the outline of a low bed and some furniture was visible.

"Aurora," said the young man, "come, come, I have waited long."

"She is not there," said the old woman, in a low voice, while her head drooped downward.

"Not there? Nay, nay, I know better, she is only shy, hiding away like a young fox. See if I do not find her."

He snatched the light and went into the little sleeping cell. The bed was there, covered with fine old chintz. A little table and two chairs stood in their several places. The scent of fresh flowers filled the cell, which, by its cleanliness, its little ornaments, and the fragrance that floated on the close air, proved that its occupant was no ordinary woman of her tribe. But everything was silent. No sparkling eyes full of mischief, no wild laugh met the young gipsy as he expected. He stood a moment with the candle held up, gazing around the room; then a painful thought seemed to strike him. He turned and fixed his eyes on the old woman.

"Where is she?"

"It was all he said, but there was something fierce in the question.

"She went to the Alhambra this morning, and has not come back yet."

The old woman did not lift her eyes as she spoke; why, she herself could not have explained; but every time that night, when word or thought had turned to her grandchild, this strange cowardice seized her.

"I will go seek Aurora," said the young gipsy, striding towards the door.

"*You!*" cried the old woman, springing like a tigress between him and the entrance. "Would you break the betrothal? Would you cast shame on my blood? Would you have the whole tribe hooting at you both?"

The chief hesitated. He knew well that the gipsy law prohibited the act he meditated. That for a betrothed pair to wander alone, or arrange a meeting beyond the confines of the settlement, would sunder them forever. He thought of this and

hesitated. But the hot blood of a jealous nature was on his forehead ; he could hardly restrain himself.

"With what man of our tribe does she wander at this time of night?" he demanded, fiercely.

"With none; she has scarcely spoken to man or woman of our people since you left for Seville," replied the old woman, with a look of earnest truth that could not but appease his suspicions in that quarter.

"But she is not alone?"

"I do not know; travellers are plenty in the Alhambra just now!"

"Travellers!" repeated the chief, with a scornful laugh, and the hot blood left his forehead—"the Busne, ha! ha! why not say this before—the little fox, she is at her work there. Aurora is a wife worthy of your count, old mother; hers are the eyes that draw gold from the Busne. But now that I have come back, she must not stay out so late; I would look in her eyes myself, the sly one. Tell her so, mother—at daylight I will be here again."

Relieved from the sharp feeling of jealousy that had at first possessed him, the gipsy count strode away content and happy—a little disappointed at not seeing his betrothed that night, but rather proud than otherwise, that she was employed in wiling gold by her sweet arts from the people whom it was his duty to hate. The idea that there could be danger or wrong to him, in her adventures with the white travellers it was her duty to delude, never entered his mind. To him, in common with the whole tribe, the idea of an attachment between a gipsy maiden and one of another race was an impossibility. Had my old grandame said that Aurora was out gathering flowers, he might have been less proud, but not better satisfied. The idea of being jealous of a Gentile, a Busne, was impossible.

But my grandmother was of a different nature. She possessed that rare organization which is called genius in civilized life, and magic with us; that exquisite sensitiveness of nerve and thought, which took the shadow of coming events long before they be

come a reality. This, with her acute wit, her sharp observation, her strange habits of solitary thought, rendered her a wonderful being. It is impossible for me to describe this. I can no more tell you why my grandame possessed the power of *feeling* what was about to happen, than I could divide the elements that sparkle in a cup of water, but the truth was there. She fancied that her knowledge came through the stars. But in natures endowed like hers, there is something more wonderful than all the stars of heaven can reveal.

What was it that induced her that night to fill that bronze vessel with those strange poisonous herbs? Why did she watch them distill so sadly, and yet with such stern patience? What would the juice of these herbs become? I will tell you another time. Now let us follow my grandmother. She was old, feeble—for years she had not been known to walk half a mile. But that night she went forth alone, creeping down the hill-side, through the hollows along the river's bank—up, up, like some hungry animal that dared to prowl through those ravines only at night-time. She was almost bent double at times, and looked in truth like a wild animal, but her purpose was strong, and that carried her forward.



CHAPTER IV.

THE MIDNIGHT RAMBLE.

A FOREST of lilies seemed to have poured both whiteness and fragrance upon the moonbeams as they fell, softly as the flower breathes, on the grim towers and fairy-like courts of the Alhambra. It was not very late, but all about the ruins lay still as midnight. The nightingales had nestled down to sleep among the roses, leaving the air which they had thrilled with

music to the mysterious chime of hidden brooklets, the bell-like tinkle of water-drops falling into unseen fountains, and the faint ripple of leaves and roses, as they yielded their voluptuous breath to the night winds.

The sounds that came from the distant city but served to render this solitude more complete. The baying of dogs, the low tinkle of guitars, the faint, hive-like hum that rose up from the dim mass of buildings, seemed all of another world. A spirit looking down upon earth from beyond the stars, could not have felt more completely isolated than a person wandering in the Alhambra after the nightingales were asleep.

Whatever of human life had been hanging about the ruins that day should have disappeared long ago, for travelling was not so common as it is now, and few persons chose to seek the Alhambra after dark. But on this night there was a sound now and then breaking the stillness—the tread of footsteps wandering about the ruins. You heard them at intervals with long pauses, and from various points, as if some one were roaming about within the very walls of the palace.

This sound had continued some time. It issued first from that beautiful double corridor which was once the grand entrance to those enchanting scenes, that even in ruins have more than the fascinations of romance. Time, that has dimmed their first loveliness, but leaves broader scope for the imagination, which, starting from these vestiges of beauty, rebuilds, creates, becomes luxurious. Contrast, too, has its share; the bleak, almost rude severity of those grim towers, the weeds, the broken stonework, the walls tracing the uneven slopes of the hill, the ruined defences, all give a force, and brighten the exquisite grace of that little Paradise, which takes one by surprise.

Well, the footsteps, I have said, came from this corridor, once the thoroughfare of kings. Then they were heard from the gorgeous saloon on the right, composing a portion of those apartments in which the Moorish Sultanas spent their isolated lives. Then these footsteps moved towards the great tower of

Comares, and two shadowy forms appeared moving slowly, almost languidly, between the slender columns and azulejo pillars of a gallery that leads that way.

These persons—for two were walking close together, and with footsteps so light that those of the female seemed but an echo of the harder and firmer tread of the man—these persons were not wandering in that heavenly place, you may be certain, from a desire to examine the wonderful beauty that surrounded them. They had looked a thousand times on those singular remnants of art. Besides, the gallery was almost wrapped in shadow, and the rich colours, the lace-like stucco, the dim gilding, were all flowing together unveiling the darkness, but nothing more.

They hurried on, for the dome of heavy wood that overhung them seemed gloomy and portentous as a thunder-cloud. The shadows within those noble carvings were black as ebony. The beautiful design, the long, graceful stalactites, honeycombed and dashed with gold, all breaking out as from the midnight of ages, had a sombre effect. It seemed, as I have said before, like a storm-cloud condensed over them, full of gloom and prophetic wrath. My parents had come forth in search of joy, light, beauty—things that would harmonize with the ineffable happiness that overflowed their own young hearts—and they hastened from beneath this frowning roof, with its marvel of art, its grim antiquity, as we flee from the chill of a vault to the warm sunshine.

Other persons might have lost themselves in this labyrinth of beauty, but my mother had trod those ruined halls before she could remember, and the darkness was nothing against her entire knowledge of the place. Now she stood in that miracle of beauty, the Hall of the Ambassadors, the grand Moorish state chamber which occupies the entire Comares Tower. They were no longer in darkness, for through the deep embrasures of its windows came the moonlight, falling upon the pavement in long gleams of radiance, and flowing over the rich colors like the unfolding of a silver banner.

It fell upon the walls with their exquisite tracery heavy in themselves, but so refined by art that the golden filagree work of Genoa is scarcely more delicate, and snow itself less pure. It gilded the azulejos. By this I mean those exquisite little tiles, brilliant as the richest enamel, of various tints—blue, red, and yellow predominating—which inlaid a gorgeous recess in the wall, and glittered around that raised platform which had been the foundation of a lost throne, now glowing in gorgeous masses, as if precious stones had been imbedded in the snow-work. All this was so richly revealed, so mistily hidden, that with a full knowledge of all which the shadows kept from view, the imagination would take flight, and you felt as if the gates of Paradise must have been flung open, before even a glimpse of so much beauty could be given to mortal eyes.

For a moment even those two lovers, in the first sublime egotism of passion which was destiny to them, stood hushed and dumb as they found themselves beneath the dome of that wonderful chamber. It was before the present ribs of wood and masses of intricate carving were introduced, with all their elaborated gloom, to brood over the most graceful specimen of art that human genius ever devised. The original dome arched above them seventy feet in the air, pure, majestic, gorgeous, as if the gold and crimson of a sunset sky were striving to break through the masses of summer clouds centred there. Then they became accustomed to the light, and things grew more distinct. The glorious moonlight of southern Europe is so luminous—the darkness that it casts so deep—it leaves no beauty unrevealed—it gathers all deformity under its shadows.

Every beautiful line of art that surrounded them was not only revealed, but idealized. The noble stucco work within the dome, moulded into exquisite designs two feet deep, pure as if cut from the snow-ridges of Alpujarras—the ground-work of gorgeous colors, red, blue, gold glowing out from those depths of woven whiteness—the long, delicate stalactites dripping with moonlight, and peering downward from the compartments of each deep interstice, as if the snow-work, beginning to melt,

had frozen again into great icicles—the pure whiteness all around, the colors burning underneath, or breaking out in rich masses like belts of jewels near the pavement—all this, as I have said, made even the lovers tread across the chamber cautiously and in silence. The stillness, the glow, the moonlight, made even the stealthy tread of their footsteps a sacrilegious intrusion.

They stole into one of the deep recesses of a window, where the moonlight fell upon them full and broad. The walls were so deep that it gave them a sort of seclusion. They began to breathe more freely, and the deep spell that had rapt their hearts for an instant, gave way to the rich flood of happiness that no power on earth could long hold in abeyance.

They stood together in the recess, but with a touch of art—for entire love has always a shyness in it, a sort of holy reserve, which is the modesty of passion—Aurora's eyes were turned aside, not exactly to the floor, but she seemed gazing upon the beautiful plain of Granada, which lay like a stretch of Paradise far below them. He was looking in her face, for there was something of wild beauty, of the shy grace which one sees in a half-tamed bird, which would have drawn the eyes of a less interested person upon the gipsy girl, as she stood there with the radiant moonlight falling upon her like a veil. As she looked forth a shade of sadness fell upon her face, singular as it was beautiful, for in her wild life the passions seldom found repose enough for that gentle twilight of the soul, sadness. But it was both strange and lovely, that unwonted softness, the first sweet hush of civilization upon her meteor-like spirit. Still he could see her eyes glitter through those curling lashes, thick, long, inky as night, but nothing could entirely shut out the wonderful radiance of those eyes.

“What are you looking at so earnestly, my bird?” said the young man, reaching forth his hand as if to draw her closer to his side.

But she hung back, and for the first time seemed to shrink from him.

"Will you not speak? Are you afraid of me, Aurora?" he added with a tone of feeling that changed her face in an instant.

"Afraid! no, no—that is not the word—but this moment something came over me as I looked upon our fires up the ravine yonder. It seems as if every cave were full of light this evening, and our people—my people—were rejoicing over something."

"Well, child, and what then? Why should this make you shrink away from me thus?" questioned the young man, smiling gently upon her as he spoke.

"It may be over *his* return."

She spoke the word with a sort of gasp, and of her own accord crept close to his side, drawing a deep breath as he folded her with his arm.

"*His* return! Of whom do you speak, little one?"

"Of—of Chaleco," faltered the gipsy child.

"And who is Chaleco?"

"Our chief—the Gipsy Count of our people—the husband they have given to me!"

"The husband they have given to you!" cried the young Englishman, flinging aside his arm, and drawing back—"the husband, Aurora!"

Aurora started back, even as he did, for she was not a woman to be spurned, child and gipsy though she was. She did not speak, but her eyes flashed, and her lips began to curl. She was a proud wild thing, that young Gitana; and the fire of her race began to kindle up beneath the love that had smothered it so long.

"Aurora, why did you not tell me of this earlier? How could I think it—you, who in my own country would yet be so mere a child—how could I dream that you were already married?"

"I did not say that," cried the young girl, and her eyes became dazzling in the moonlight, so eager was she to make herself understood. "It is not yet—he, Chaleco, my grandmother,

all the tribe say that it must be—and I know that he is to hurry home the sweetmeats and presents from Seville."

"The sweetmeats? What have sweetmeats to do with us?"

"Nothing, I dare say; perhaps you do not use them; but with us there is no marriage without sweetmeats, a ton or more. I heard Chaleco say once that he would dance knee deep in them when I become his—his"—

She broke off, and her face became dusky with the hot blood that rushed over it, for the Englishman, spite of his anger and of his sharp interest in the subject, burst into a fit of merry laughter.

"Why do you laugh?" she said, with trembling lips—"does it please you that they will marry me to Chaleco—that my life must end then?"

"What do you mean, Aurora? I never saw you weep, but your voice seems choked with tears. Tell me what is this trouble that threatens us? What is it makes you weep, for I see now that your eyes are full, that your cheeks are wet? Come close to me, darling, say, what is it? Not my foolish laughter, I could not help it, child, the idea of dancing one's self into married life through an ocean of sweetmeats was too ridiculous!"

"It may be," said Aurora, gently, for the tears she was shedding had quenched all her anger. "It does not seem so to us, but then a poor child who cannot help fearing death a little, when she knows that the grave lies beyond all this, it may well trouble her."

"The grave, Aurora!—what has driven you mad? The grave for you, my pretty wild bird? Nay, nay, leave this sort of nervousness to our fine ladies at home. Here it is pure nonsense."

"Hush!" exclaimed my mother, and her eyes flashed like lightning as she turned them around the vast chamber. "That was a sound; surely I heard some one move."

"I hear nothing," said the young man, listening and speak-

ing low. "It was a bat probably, flitting across the dome—these things are common, you know"—

"Yes, yes ! but yonder the shadows are moving."

"I see nothing !"

"But I did," whispered the young girl, wildly, "I did !"

"It might have been something sweeping between the moonlight and the window," suggested her companion, who, quite ignorant of any great danger in being watched, felt little anxiety about the matter.

"This was no cypress bough, no bat trying its wings in the night. Such movements are common here, but they do not chill one to the soul like this—see !"

The gipsy placed her little hands in those of the young man, and though she clasped her fingers hard together both her hands and arms trembled till they shook his.

"What does all this mean, Aurora?" he questioned, earnestly. "I thought nerves were only for fine ladies."

There was a slight sarcasm in his voice, but the girl did not seem to heed it. Her great wild eyes continued to roam over the ambassador's chamber, and she listened, not to him, but for something that seemed lurking in a distant corner of the room. At length she drew a deep breath as if inexpressibly relieved, and lifted her eyes to his again.

"It is gone," she said, smiling uneasily—"it is gone !"

"What is gone ?"

"I don't know, but something has just left this room: I can breathe again."

"Did you see any one depart ?"

"No !"

"Did you hear it ?"

"No !"

"Then how could you be certain ?"

"I *felt* it."

"How ?"

"Did you never feel certain of a presence which you neither saw nor heard ?"

"I do not know ; perhaps yes," replied the young man, thoughtfully ; "the atmosphere of a particular person sometimes does seem to enwrap us, but this is visionary speculation. I did not think these vagaries could haunt a wild, fresh, untaxed brain like yours. They have hitherto seemed to me purely the result of an over-refined intellect."

"It seemed to me as if my grandmother were close by," said the gipsy.

"Your grandmother ! I thought she never left her cave—her home !"

"I know that—she could not reach this place—you must be right. But why should the bare thought have made me tremble if she was not here—I who never tremble, at least from dread ?"

"And if not from dread, what is the power that can make you tremble?" inquired the youth, bending his mischievous eyes smilingly upon her.

She did not speak, but the little hands, still clasped in his, began to quiver like newly-caught ring-doves. Those wonderful eyes were lifted to his, luminous still, for all the dews of her young soul could not have quenched their brilliancy—but so flooded with love-light, so eloquent of the one great life passion, that the smile died on his lip. There was something almost startling in the thought that his hand had stricken the crystal rock from which such floods of brightness gushed forth. He felt like one who had, half in sport, aroused some sleeping spirit, which must henceforth be a destiny to him—an angel or a demon in his path forever.

"You almost make *me* tremble," he whispered, bending forward and kissing her upturned forehead softly, and with a sort of awe. "Come, love, come, let us walk ; this still moonlight lies upon us both like a winding-sheet."

"Yes, yes, let us go," cried the gipsy eagerly, and gliding down the spacious hall, the two moved on, seeking that exquisite colonnade from which the Moors commanded a view of the whole valley and plain in which Granada stands. Now all

was darkness. The slender marble shafts blended and bedded in with coarse mortar, were scarcely visible. The moonbeams broke against the rude walls, and fell powerless from the beautiful arches which they had once flooded with silvery light; but the lovers walked on through all this gloom reassured, and with their thoughts all centred in each other once more. Aurora forgot her fears, and he was not of an age or temperament to yield himself long to gloomy fancies.

At length they entered a small chamber, still in good repair, and flooded with a moonlight which swept through the delicate columns of a small balcony or temple that jutted from the outer wall. The pavement seemed flagged with solid silver, the moonbeams lay so hard and unbrokenly upon it, and received these exquisite shadows as virgin ivory takes the soft traces of an artist's pencil. The glow of rich fresco paintings broke out from the walls, brilliant as when the colors were first laid on by order of that Vandal Charles. In the soft scenic obscurity, the deformity or mutilations of time were unseen. You missed the frost-like Moorish tracery from over that bed of colors, but scarcely felt the loss amid the misty gorgeousness that replaced it.

They passed through this room and went out upon the marble colonnade. Nothing but the delicate Moorish shafts I have mentioned stood between them and the beautiful plain of Granada. Lights still sparkled in all directions over the old city, as if heaven had sent down a portion of its stars to illuminate a spot that so nearly resembled itself. The gentle undulations of the plain were broken into hills and ridges of the richest green. The soft haze blended with the moonlight where it lay upon the horizon. The mountains that overlooked all this, on the left, were cut up with ravines full of black shadows, green as emerald at the base, glittering with snow at the top.

Close by was that belt of huge dark trees, sweeping around the old fortress, with glimpses of the Darro breaking up through the dusky foliage—on the right, a dim convent nestled among

the hills, and nearer yet, the vine-draped ascent of Sierra del Sol, with its mountain villa, its Darro waters, its orange terrace, and rose hedges, all filling the sweet night with melody and fragrance ! Do you wonder that they forgot themselves ? —that they looked on a scene like this filled only with a delicious sense of its beauty ?

The air was balmy with fragrance, yet cool from the mountain snows, invigorating, and still voluptuous. The entire stillness, too—nothing was astir but the sweet, low sounds of nature, the rustle of myrtle thickets, the mournful shiver of a cypress tree as the wind sighed through it, the movement of a bird in its nest.

Is it strange, I say, that all this beauty became food to the love that filled their young lives with its first tumultuous emotions ? That while they forgot that love, and thought only of the scene before them, it grew the stronger from neglect ? When they did speak, it was in low tones, and as if a loud word might disturb the entire happiness that reigned in each full heart.

“Aurora, you have been here many times before, and at this hour, perhaps—say, have your eyes ever fallen upon the scene when it was beautiful as now ?” murmured the young man, dreamily.

“I do not know ; I have seen it a thousand times, but never, never felt that it was really beautiful. To-night it seems as if I had just been aroused from sleep—that all my life has been one dull stupor. I shudder at the remembrance of what I was. I pant for new scenes of beauty—new emotions, these are so full of joy. Tell me, Busne, my own, own Busne, does happiness like this never kill ? I grow faint with it as one does when the orange trees are thick overhead, and burdened with blossoms. My breath comes heavily as if laden with their fragrance. I long to creep away into the shadows, yonder, and cry myself to sleep.”

“Why do you wish to weep, my bird ? Tears are for the unhappy.”

"Yet you see that I am weeping ; my eyes are blinded ; the lights down yonder seem floating in a mist. I cannot see, and yet I know that you are smiling there in the moonlight. It is happiness, oh, such happiness that floods my eyes."

He was not smiling, or if he had been for one moment, the impulse died of itself the next. Educated as he had been, hemmed in by conventionalities, it was impossible not to be startled by the wildness, the depth of feeling revealed by this strange child. The very reckless innocence with which she exposed every sensation as it arose in her heart—the intensity of feeling thus betrayed made him thoughtful, nay, anxious. It was only for a brief time, however. Before Aurora could notice his abstraction it had disappeared.

"Is it, indeed, love for me, Aurora, that makes you so happy?" he questioned with fond egotism.

"I do not know ; to-night I scarcely know myself. Love ! it has a soft, sweet sound—but does not mean enough. Oh, if you could speak Rommany now, in our language are such words ; oh, how insipid your word love is when compared to them."

In a deep, passionate voice, the very tones of which seemed to thrill and burn into the heart, she uttered some words in pure Rommany, that language which has yet been traced to no given origin. Like ourselves, it is an outcast, vagabond dialect, which baffles investigation.

He understood nothing of what she said. But her eyes so dazzlingly brilliant ; her lips kindled to a vivid red, as it were, by the burning words that passed through them ; the exquisite modulations of each tone, all had a powerful effect upon the young man—powerful, but not that which might have been expected, for it filled his mind with distrust.

She did not heed the change in his countenance. Juliet herself was never more thoroughly inspired or more trusting. Crafty in all things else, our women are single-hearted as children in their love. Truth itself is not more constant. Religion does not give you a trust more perfect—religion—love

is a religion to them, they have no better, poor, wandering creatures, bereft of all things, home, name, nationality, faith. But all people must have something that they deem holy, something upon which the soul can lean for strength and comfort. Happier nations put faith in a God, we poor outcasts have only our household affections, and we keep them sacred as your altars.

Though the gipsy adopts the faith of any nation that gives him protection, becomes Catholic, Protestant, Mohammedan, Idolater, as the case may be, it is all a pretence. In his soul he loathes the object that he craftily seems to worship.

But the Englishman knew nothing of this. He had no idea of the rigid bonds with which antique custom hedges in the domestic affections in a gipsy household. These affections are the most sacred thing known to us. I have said that as a people we have no other religion.

With all this ignorance of our customs, how could he comprehend a creature like that, with her unreserve, her passion so vivid, that it struggled constantly for some new medium of expression, and grew impatient of the stately Spanish, and the few English words that seemed to chill every impulse as she strove to frame it into utterance. He could not believe that a woman trained to deception, wild, unchecked, nay, taught to believe the right wrong, was in everything that related to her own womanly tenderness true as gold—honest as infancy.

He shrunk from this poor child then, as her own language gushed up and swept the cold Spanish from her lips. It seemed to him that she must have uttered those words before; perhaps to some traveller-dupe like himself; perhaps to Chaleco—Chaleco. He began to dwell upon that name with jealous eagerness, and coupled it with the words of Rommany that still trembled on Aurora's lips. For the first time he began to doubt the poor gipsy girl; yet I, who know the women of his own people to the soul, say to you most solemnly, that among the best of his fair compatriots he might have searched

a life-time, and in vain, for a young heart so pure in every loving impulse, so thoroughly virtuous as that which beat within the velvet bodice of the little Gitana.

"Aurora, look in my face," he said, seizing both her hands as she ceased speaking.

She did look in his face with a glance that ought to have shamed him—a glance, smiling, fond, and yet so void of evil. He might have searched in those eyes till doomsday, and found nothing there but a beautiful reflection of himself.

"Aurora, you have repeated these heathenish words before !"

He made the assertion somewhat faintly, for something in her look half-smothered the suspicion as it arose to his lips.

"Before ! when ?" she answered, in smiling surprise.

"To Chaleco, perhaps."

"To Chaleco—oh, never ; I could not speak thus to Chaleco," and the poor girl shuddered at the sound of that name, as an apostate would when reminded of his old faith.

"But your chief, this Chaleco, he has uttered them to you."

"He—where—at what time ?"

"Here, perhaps, by moonlight, as you are now standing by me."

She looked at him with a troubled and questioning eye. He was a mystery to her then, and the child was striving to fathom the new feeling that she saw in his countenance.

"No ! Chaleco never came here with me at night—never at all since we were little children ! Have I not told you that he is my betrothed ?"

She spoke sadly, almost in tears.

"Well, is not that a good reason why he of all others should overwhelm you with this sweet Rommany, here by moonlight, as you now stand with me ?"

"Oh, that could never happen," she exclaimed eagerly, "they would take the countship from him—they would drive us both ignominiously from the tribe ; you do not know our

ways, our laws. Of all the men in our tribe, Chaleco would not dare to seek me here."

"Why?"

"It is not permitted; we are betrothed, and so never must be alone; it would be infamy!"

"And to be here with me, is that nothing?"

"There is no law that keeps us from seeking the Busne. It is our duty. From them we win most gold!"

The young man recoiled.

"Gold, is it for that you come?" he said bitterly. "No, no, I have offered tenfold what she has ever taken. It was not for that you came, Aurora, I had rather die than think it. Speak, child, tell me it was not for gold that you sought me!"

"I dared not go home empty-handed, for the grandame would have given me blows," answered the poor girl, while tears began to run down her cheeks. "I could not dance to others as in former times; yet I never touched a piece of your coin without feeling all the strength leave me—without longing to hide myself from every one. Of late you have never offered money when I came."

"I know—I know," said the young man, quickly, "it seemed like a desecration; I could not do it."

"Oh, how happy I was to feel this, it made me so grateful, but I was afraid of her. Sometimes I would be for hours getting home, in hopes that she would be asleep?"

"My poor child, I never thought of this. Is the old Sibyl cruel to you, then?"

"Every one is cruel to me now—every one but you; and to-night, it seems sometimes, as if you were joining them. What have I done that you should make me weep like the rest?"

"Nothing, my poor Aurora, nothing. The fault is mine; I was annoyed by what you told me of this Chaleco; it made me unreasonable."

"Was that all?" cried the poor little gipsy, brightening up, and pressing her lips softly down into the palm of his offered hand.

He made no answer, but drew her gently toward him, and for a time they stood together in thoughtful silence. Their eyes were bent on the same object, one that they had usually avoided; for there was little promise of tranquillity in that direction.

Amid the luxuriance of the scene before them, so full of all that might reasonably win the attention, their eyes were fascinated by one object alone, and that so dreary, so uninviting, that it aroused nothing but ideas of sin and wretchedness, unhappy subjects for hearts laden as theirs were, with the first sweet impulses of affection.

They were looking towards the Barranco, that bleak ravine, cut like a huge wound in the beautiful hills, on whose barren sides the gipsy dwellings were burrowed. Even with the soft moonlight sleeping over its sterility, the ravine had a miserable aspect, choked up with great, spectre-like aloes and coarse prickly-pears—with a few dusty fig trees, and stunted vines trailing themselves along the meagre soil that just served to cover them with a sparse growth of leaves.

These unseemly objects were now blended into one mass of blackness in the depth of the ravine, giving lurid force to some dozen forges in full blast, that shot their weird fires from the open caves above.

This was no unusual thing. The gipsies all over the world have been workers of iron from the beginning, and those of Granada were ever most busy at their craft after sunset. But this evening the fires seemed to glow with unusual brilliancy. Long lines of light shot across the ravine. Men and women moved to and fro before the open caves. It was a scene that Dante would have loved.

"It is strange," said the Englishman, musingly, "it is strange that any human being could select that miserable place to live in. There is something unearthly—fiendish in the choice."

"Choice," answered Aurora, sadly, "whoever allows choice to the Zincoli? No, no, if there is one spot on earth more dreary than another, it is set aside for them."

“And you, Aurora, so delicate, so full of imagination, how can you live there, burrowed up in the earth like some beautiful wild animal? Surely, surely any fate must be better than that!”

The young man looked at her earnestly. His words had not been addressed to her, but were an argument against his own conscience—a reply to some undercurrent of thought all the time going on in his mind. He was about to say something more, to utter the thought that was taking form in his own bosom, but she looked at him so earnestly—her large, fond eyes so full of innocent love-light sought his with so sweet a trust—he could not go on. The holy influence of true affections clung to his soul like fetters of gold. The evil spirit tempting him so powerfully was not strong enough to fling them off.

Her ignorance, her helplessness, what a defence it proved against all his knowledge—for young as he appeared, the stranger was an old man in experience! He had begun to live early. Youth had been swept from his path as if by a tornado. The wrong that he might do then could have none of the excuses which inexperience gives. He was no ordinary person, but had lived more in those brief years than many an old man.

She saw no second meaning in his words, but turning her eyes once more upon the Barranco, answered according to her own innocent interpretation of their import.

“It does seem dark to me now. I never felt it till lately, but the caves are very dismal, close, smoky; the air seems to smother me at night. Besides, I am afraid it is only in the old woods yonder, or up here, lifted half way into the sky, that I can breathe freely. You are looking at the ravine,” she added, “and I—now I can feel how coarse, how dark, how like a den for wild animals it seems to you—for within the last few weeks I have felt a strange love of beautiful things—for with them I can think of you.”

“Then you never think of me in connection with that infernal hollow yonder?” questioned the young man.

“What, yonder? Oh, no, within the darkness that was once

my home, surrounded by those strong, fierce men, grimed with iron dust, and smelling of the mules they have been tending—I fold you deep in my heart, afraid to turn my thoughts that way—I bury you in my sleep, and strive not to exist till I can escape hither. It seems like two worlds, this, where you sometimes come, and yonder where I cannot even think of you.”

“But here you are happy even though I am not present.”

“Ah, yes, here I am free—here I have such dreams—oh, a thousand times brighter than any that ever come to my sleep. Sometimes I think these soft, sweet dreams are better than being with you.”

“And in these dreams are we ever separated?” questioned the youth, pursuing the same undercurrent of thought that had swept through his bosom all that evening. But she did not take his meaning; the time for reflection had not arrived; she was too busy with her own sensations for anything but dreams.

“Separated! oh, no. What would the brightest of these dreams be worth if you were not in the midst? I love to come up here just before nightfall, when the snowy top of Sierra Nevada seems sprinkled with roses, and a soft floating haze, now purple, now golden, settles upon the plain, the hills, and the beautiful old city—when the insects are nestling themselves down to sleep, and the nightingales send gushes of music through the woods. How I love to sit here, perfectly alone, while the colors float together in soft masses on the walls around, and all this vast heap of ruin shapes itself into beauty again.

“Then all that is ruinous, all that is gloomy disappears; the marble pillars glitter with gold again, a network of snow breaks over these paintings. From that marble slab in the corner, perforated in a hundred places, floats up a cloud of perfume. I feel it in my garments, and penetrating the folds of my hair. I go forth. *We* go forth, for you are always by my side. The long colonnade yonder glitters in the twilight; the filagree arches are tipped with a rosy hue. The shadows are all of a faint purple;

the pavements gleam beneath our feet like beds of precious stones. The nightingales are heard more faintly as we penetrate deep into the building, overpowered by the silvery rush of fountains at play in the courts.

“The myrtle hedges rustle softly as we pass into the Court of Lions. There in my dreams I replace all that has been torn away ; the hundred slender columns that support those flagree arches are once more burnished with gold. The old tints break out afresh from the capitals, wreathing their endless variety with radiant colors. The azulejo pillars glowing like twisted rainbows, all come back softened by a mental haze that creeps over me at such times.

“We leave the court—pass on through those wonderful arches, and enter the saloons which people say were once the most private retreat of the Moorish kings. But they are never in my mind—those dead monarchs. It is for another—only one—that I heap those alcoves in which sultanas have slept with silken cushions, and mingle cool drinks from the snows of Alpujarras ; those decorations upon the wall, so like the rare antique lace with which queens adorn themselves—that saloon, with its great pillars of marble gleaming in the light like solid masses of pearl, and crowned with ornaments so rich, that when broken to pieces each fragment is a marvel of itself. Even these are not beautiful enough for one whom my soul makes lord of all !

“For him I bring back the past. Rare colors start up, fresh and vivid, from under that exquisite lace-work, where you can just see that they have existed. Stalactites starred with gold penetrate downward like a rich conglomeration of pearls escaping through a thousand rainbows embedded in the ceiling. It is a luxury to breathe the air in these rooms, so rich with perfumes, yet kept so pure and cool by the innumerable fountains that penetrate every corner with their dreamy murmurs.”

CHAPTER V.

FAIRY SCENES AND FATAL PASSIONS.

MY mother paused. She had talked herself out of breath ; but her eyes, her mouth, the very position of her person were eloquent still. She had spoken rapidly and in broken sentences. Her language was graphic, and more like an inspiration than I can give it in cold English. Her very ignorance gave picturesque effect to her fancies. I have done her injustice, because my set phrases have tamed her vigorous wildness with conventionalisms. The pictures that she placed before the wondering Englishman in her own wild fashion were vivid as stars.

She was silent awhile, and he could see the bright inspiration fading from her features. Her eyes drooped ; the reserve, half shame, half exhaustion which follows the inspired moments of genius, crept over her. She dared not turn her eyes upon the young man, he was so still, and she thought that he must be smiling derisively—strange sensitiveness for one of her class—but genius is of no class. And though my mother was wild and untamed, leaving neither poem, painting, or statue behind, her entire life was a poem unwritten save in her gentleness and her agony.

“ Ah, if these dreams did not fade so soon,” she said, at last, in a timid voice, apologizing for her late abandonment, “ but they last scarcely longer than the sunset which brings them. Do these sweet thoughts ever haunt you ?” she continued, still with downcast eyes.

“ They have !—yes, they have !” replied the young man, in a voice so stirred with feeling that the gipsy started, and the blood left her cheeks.

“ And did they die thus ?” she questioned.

“Briefer, shorter—my dreams—but why talk of them? We are in Spain, alone—here in the Alhambra—the Alhambra! the very realm of fancies! Why talk of dreams that I may have had in other times, other lands? Indulge in yours, poor child, this is the place, the time. Oh, if you could only dream on forever; I have lost the power!”

“Dream on forever!” cried the gipsy girl, lifting her eyes and her voice. “What, here, and with that in view?—my dreams here! my life there. Here all is life, grace, beauty, love! There, burrowed in the earth, stifled, struggling, the miserable Gitanilla—there is no waking from that!”

Her lithe form was drawn to its height. She pointed with one hand toward the gloomy Barranco, and with the other dashed away the tears that sprang, like great diamonds, to her eyes; then flinging both hands into the air, she sunk upon the floor, buried her face in the crimson folds of her saya, and broke into a passion of sobs.

The young man looked down upon her, almost calmly, quite in silence. Those who have suffered much naturally shrink from any exhibition of strong passions; besides, it was the first evidence of the fierce spirit of her race that he had witnessed. This new phase in her character astonished and repulsed him. It was the first time that she had seemed to him absolutely a Gitana. So, as she wept out her bitter passion, he stood over her, if not irritated, at least painfully thoughtful.

“Aurora,” he said at last, stooping toward her with gentle coldness, “get up; cease weeping thus. It annoys me; I do not love you so well!”

She started up, choked back the sobs that were swelling in her throat, and stood before him with downcast eyes, like a culprit.

This self-power, the gentle submission that followed, reassured her lover. He smiled cordially again, took her hand, and drew her gently from the colonnade, moving downward partially in darkness, till they reached the Court of Lions.

The Gitanilla and her companion entered the Court of Lions

through one of those incomparable pavilions that enrich each end of that marvellous spot. No dream could be more heavenly than the beauty that surrounded them. The gorgeousness, that time and siege had swept away, was more than replaced by the luminous grace shed over what remained by the moonlight.

On either hand stood a line of shaft-like columns, delicate beyond all our ideas of usefulness, yet with a superb filagree peristyle resting lightly, as so much snow upon their exquisite capitals—these capitals, so full of varied art, each fragment of marble a marvel of itself—each faded leaf the richest fancy of an artist. The arches rising between these graceful pillars were half choked up with shadows, leaving all the gorgeous apartments to which they led in misty doubt. It seemed as if with a single wave of the hand you might sweep away those curtain-like shadows, with a step enter the saloons, and find the moon sleeping upon their silken cushions.

It chanced that the Englishman had never visited the Court of Lions before, when the moon was at its full. He stood within the portico spell-bound, those noble masses of filagree work, rising up from the supporting pillars, seemed a marvel of fairy work, like ocean foam frozen into shapes of beauty—the pavement glittering with azulejos, broad golden tints, rich blue and red prevailing—the noble Fountain of Lions, rushing in floods of crystal over its great alabaster basin, which gleamed through the falling torrent like a solid mass of ice raining itself away, but never diminishing, all filled him with wonder and delight. How those shining water-drops idealized the twelve marble lions, upon whose backs the alabaster basin rested, flooding them with sheets of crystal, wreathing their huge legs with pearly froth, sending a shower of bubbles into their scaly manes, eddying, leaping, whirling around them, a fantastic storm of light, through which no deformity could be discovered !

Nothing but the rush of these falling waters could be heard in the Alhambra. Everything else was still as death. Oh, it was happiness to breathe in this wilderness of beauty ! After

all, there is such a thing as being intoxicated with mere physical harmony. With me great joy always rains itself away in tears. To my fancy, no person ever experienced perfect happiness, who has not felt the blissful dew leave his heart in tears.

But to know this, the bitter feelings of our nature must not have been recently disturbed. Neither the Gitanilla nor her lover were sufficiently tranquil for a thorough appreciation of the scene. Their thoughts were too much occupied with each other. Still, it was impossible to look upon this wonderful spot and not yield themselves up to it for a time, and this had a softening influence upon him. She, poor thing, required nothing to subdue her, for there is not a being on earth so gentle as a high-spirited woman when her strong passion is once surrendered—I will not say subdued—to the influence of the man she loves.



CHAPTER VI.

THE SIBYL AND THE LOVERS.

THERE had been no absolute disagreement between Aurora and her lover; yet with that keen intuition which belongs to love, and which becomes almost superhuman when love blends with genius in a woman's heart, she felt that he was disturbed, that she had done something to arouse painful thoughts, which led him, for the time, away from her. She did not weep—he had told her that grief annoyed him—but in the shadow of that beautiful portico her little heart might heave, unnoticed, beneath its velvet bodice, and, spite of herself, tears would swell up into her great, mournful eyes.

“You seem weary, little one,” he said at length, taking

heed of her drooping attitude. "Let us find a place to sit down. I also begin to feel tired; we have been wandering in the ruins these three hours!"

He moved on, and she kept by his side, with her face averted, that he might not see her tears. They crossed an angle of the court, and entering one of the arches, passed through an open door into the *Sala de los Abencerrages*. The marble basin of a fountain, now dry, occupied the centre of this room, and upon its rounded edge the two seated themselves.

Here the moonbeams came more faintly, penetrating the open work cloister, and throwing fantastic shadows on the pavement. Beautiful stalactites hung over them, peering downward, as it were, from a bed of shadows. Portions of the walls were dim. The rest gleamed out, with all their delicate tracery revealed, like luminous frost-work, such as you, of a colder climate, find upon your window-panes, when the mornings are unusually cold.

They had been sitting there some minutes, yet I do not think they had spoken. His arm was around her, and it is impossible that he should not have felt the swelling of her heart, for, as I have said, it was flooded with a tender grief, brought on by that hard, hard thing to bear, the first reproof from beloved lips. He was a man of strong feelings, but not one to utter those feelings much in words. A degree of proud reserve followed him even in his moments of deepest tenderness.

No man ever guessed half that was going on in his heart, and what is stranger still, no woman ever knew the whole. There might have been something of pride in his sensations when he saw the entire control that he had gained over that poor, wild heart. For what human being is above pride in that conquest which sweeps the entire life of another into his bosom? But he was touched also with a feeling of sadness, of regret for having moodily reproved her for what was, after all, the spirit of her race. Still he did not speak these regrets, but drew her closer to him, and taking her little brown hand in his, pressed it to his lips.

He felt her heart leap against his arm, but she only crept a little closer to him, trembling all over, and smiling through her tears.

“And do you indeed love me so much?” he said, with a tone of sadness in his voice, for he was asking himself where must all this end; and the answer that presented itself made his better nature recoil.

She drew his hand toward her, and pressed her lips upon the palm. There was something peculiar and child-like in this act. With all her unreserve, it was the only outward proof that she had ever given him of the passion that was transfiguring her whole nature.

While her lips were still upon his palm, he felt her start, listen, and shudder all over. Then clinging to his arm with one hand, she turned her head and looked backward over her shoulder. It was in this chamber that the Abencerrages were supposed to have been beheaded, and a deep, broad stain, which tradition marks out as their blood, discolors half the marble fountain on which the lovers sat. Feeling her shudder, and remarking that her head was turned that way, he supposed that it must be this blood shadow which suddenly occupied her thoughts.

“Nay, how childish,” he was beginning to say; but she broke from his arm, rushed by the fountain, and seizing hold of a slender pillar at the opening of an alcove, all in shadow, as if stricken by some sudden fear, stood peering into the recess.

He arose and was going toward her, when a little object, scarcely larger than a child of ten years old, and so thin that it seemed but the shadow of something else, passed slowly by him. He would not have believed it human, but for the snake-like glitter of two eyes that gleamed their rage upon him, and gave vitality to the shadow as it passed.

Aurora still clung to the column, waving to and fro as if she must have fallen but for that support. She turned her face to his as he came up, but the pallor that lay upon it, the fear that

quivered over limb and feature, had utterly changed her. He would not have known the face again.

"Aurora, what is this? What terrible thing has happened?" he exclaimed, reaching forth his arm to support her. But she shrank away, shuddering, and still clinging to the pillar, she writhed herself behind it, whispering hoarsely,

"It is my grandmother; she has heard us!"

The Englishman was enough affected by this to hasten into the court, and satisfy himself that the person who had passed him was indeed Aurora's grandmother. He saw her gliding away through the shadowy side of the cloisters, and it seemed to him that muttered wrath and shrill curses were blended with the silvery rush of the fountain.

The sound struck him with strange terror. Still ignorant of the exact danger that might threaten him or the poor Gitanilla, he could not account for the cold thrill that passed through his frame as the curses pierced to his ear through the sweet fall of those waters.

He went back into the *Sala de los Abencerrages*, and found my mother crouching down by the marble basin, with her wild eyes turned toward the entrance.

"Was it she? Did she speak?" whispered the poor child, rising with difficulty and moving toward him.

The young man was shocked by this wild terror, so disproportioned, as he thought, to the cause. He took both her hands in his and shook them gently, hoping thus to arouse her from the trance of fear that seemed to have benumbed the very life in her veins.

"Sit down by me, Aurora—sit down, child, here in your old place, and tell me what all this means."

He spoke with gentle authority, and without a shadow of the terror that shook every limb of her body. The sound of his clear, bold voice seemed to reassure her. She crept forward with timid hesitation, and allowed him to place her by his side.

"Now tell me, child, what troubles you thus? If that vi-

cious shadow was indeed your grandmother, she has gone away quietly enough, no harm has come of it."

"You little know," said the Gitanilla, still keeping her eyes upon the entrance—"you little know our people, or her."

"But what is there for me to learn? Tell me what this fear means?"

"It means," answered the poor thing, locking her hands hard and pressing them down upon her trembling knees—"it means that they will poison me."

"Poison you! this is the madness of fear," exclaimed the young man, impatiently.

"Or perhaps stone me to death in some dark hollow of the mountains, the whole tribe hunting down one poor creature for her love of the Busne, Chaleco among the first."

"Aurora, are you mad? Has this miserable little witch crazed you?"

"You will not believe me—you have not seen the poison drao scattered into the wholesome food which an enemy is to eat—or a poor girl strangled in her bed, and buried in some rude pass of the mountains, on the very day when she was to have danced at her own wedding festival."

"But this is murder!" cried the young man. "The laws of Spain will not permit men to kill their females in cold blood."

"Our laws are older than those of Spain," answered the Gitanilla, with a certain degree of pride in her tone, as if she gloried in the antiquity of the very custom that was to crush her. "Our laws are older and better kept than those of the Busne; traditions do not run so far back as their origin. They are fixed and unchangeable—he who breaks them dies!"

"But what have you done, innocent child, that these laws, however strengthened by antiquity, should fall on you?"

"I love you, a Busne—one of the race we hold accursed—our enemies—our oppressors. I am alone with you, and have been for hours, here in these vast ruins. But that is nothing; that they approve so long as it brings gold; but I love you!

I have said it in words, in my looks, every way in which love can speak when it burdens the heart with its sweet joy. Shê, my weird grandame, has seen this. Did I not feel that she was close by in the ambassador's hall?"

"But they dare not kill you for that—for the innocent affection which you could not help—affection that has dreamed of no wrong."

"She has seen us here, sitting together; she has heard me, heard you. They will believe me an outcast of the tribe, and kill me as they would a viper!"

The young man arose, walked out into the court, and began to pace up and down the glittering pavement, hurriedly, as one seeks rapid motion when some great mental or moral struggle is going on in the mind. Gradually his steps became more rapid; his brow flushed, and with an impetuous movement of one hand, as if thus dashing aside all further consideration of a harassing subject, he sought the Gitanilla again.

"Aurora," he said, in a hurried manner, "you shall never go back into that nest of fiends—look up, child—you are mine now. They shall not touch a hair of your head, or even look upon your face again! Come, what have you to fear? I am powerful—I am rich, and I love you. I struggle against it no longer—it is a duty now, I love you! Go with me to my own country—I cannot give you this sky or these fairy ruins, but you shall be surrounded with beautiful things nevertheless. You shall study, learn; forget that miserable ravine burrowed with human fox-holes, and swarming with murderers. Come, Aurora, look up, I long to see that cold, dead color swept away. Smile, smile my bird, we will not part again."

When a nation has but one virtue, how powerful that one must be. There is much good in every human heart that God has created, and when all that good pours itself into a single channel, it has a power and vitality which men of more diffuse cultivation little dream of.

Aurora knew nothing of her lover's rank, of his wealth, or the thousand barriers that lay between his condition and hers.

She was aware that sometimes, when a Gitano becomes wealthy—a rare case—he had been known to wed a Busne wife, but that such unions invariably made the Gitano an object of suspicion and dislike to his own people. If this privilege were permitted to the men, it might be—she could not tell, no case had ever come beneath her observation—extended to the females also. But then a betrothed female like herself—the promised wife of a count—how was this to be hoped? All these thoughts, full of doubt and trouble, came upon my poor mother while the Englishman stood impatiently—for his restrained manner had entirely disappeared—waiting her reply.

“They would not let me go—I am betrothed. No one of our females have ever married with the Busne,” she said, at last, in a voice that betrayed the utter despondency that possessed her.

The young man started, and a flush swept over his forehead. At first he found it difficult to speak. How very, very hard it is for a man, whose impulses are all honorable, to express a wrong wish in words! But after a brief struggle he became cold and grave. She must understand his full meaning. He would not deceive—would not even persuade her. If she went with him it must be with a full knowledge of her position, of the impossibility that any marriage could ever exist between them.

Some men would have glossed this over, covered it with transcendental poetry, smothered the sin with rose-leaves. He did nothing of the kind. Knowing the wrong, he would neither conceal this conviction from himself nor her. Therefore it was that, with a cold, almost severe conciseness, he explained himself. True, there was little merit in this; it was rather a peace offering to his own pride than a homage to truth. From all that he had heard of the gipsies, he did not believe that anything he was saying could make much difference to the Gitanilla. But it was due to himself, and so he spoke plainly.

She understood him at last. It was with great difficulty,

for the idea entered her mind as a proposition of murder would have done. It dawned upon her by degrees, arousing and kindling the wild Gitana blood in her veins with every new thought. She heard him through, not without attempting to speak, but the effort seemed strangling her. He saw that she writhed faintly, once or twice, but heeded it not and went on.

At length she sprang up, her cheeks in a dusky blaze, her eyes full of lightning. Her little tawny hand was clenched like a vice and stamping her foot upon the pavement, she struggled for voice. It broke out at last, loud and ringing, like the cry of an angry bird.

"I am a Gitana—a Gitana. Did you take me for a Busne?"

Before he could answer, or had half recovered from the surprise into which this storm of passion threw him, she had gone. He saw her dart into the cloister, and caught one glimpse of a shadow that seemed to leap across the court, but even that had disappeared before he could reach the broad moonlight.

CHAPTER VII.

WAITING FOR VENGEANCE.

CLARE stood in the Court of Lions, absolutely bewildered by the suddenness of what had happened. As he listened the sound of a footstep, heavier than the one he sought—but of this he did not think at the time—reached him from the lower end of the court. He moved hurriedly in that direction, and just as he reached the azulejo pillars, that still retain their first beauty in that portion of the ruin, a man came toward him, but keeping behind the columns with a sort of cowardly ferocity, like one who was seeking an opportunity to strike in the dark.

The Englishman paused. There was something in the appearance of this man, closely as he kept to the shadows, which reminded him of an unpleasant adventure that he had met on his route to Granada. The idea was enough. He darted forward and stood face to face with the leader of a prowling band of gipsies who had robbed him, not two months before, on his way from Seville.

The man seemed to recognize him also. At first he slunk away as if with a hope of concealment, but a slight jingle of the numerous silver tags on his jacket, and a stealthy movement of the right arm downward, while his eyes followed the Englishman like a basilisk, were significant of some more vicious intent.

Slowly, and as a weary man might change his position, the gipsy drew up his figure, and a gleam of moonlight shooting through the net-work of an arch close by, fell upon the blade of a Manchegan knife which he held with a backward thrust of the arm, slowly raising the point to a level with the heart he wished to reach.

Few strangers are mad enough to go unarmed in Spain. The Englishman was bold as a lion too, but with all this he could not have drawn the pistol from his bosom before that knife had done its work. Still he made the effort, keeping his eyes steadily on the man, and with something of the effect which such looks have upon fierce animals. But the point of that murderous blade rose higher and higher. In another moment it would have been sped ; but on the instant a sharp clutch was laid on the assassin's arm, and the gipsy Sibyl thrust herself between the combatants.

"Back, Chaleco—begone, I say. How dare you step in between me and my right? Think you Papita wants your knife to help her?" cried the fierce old witch, grinding her sharp teeth together at each pause of her speech.

"But the wrong is mine," answered Chaleco fiercely. "Aurora was my betrothed : let her die—let her die ; but he, I will send him before !"

He struggled with the old woman who had clutched the knife with her tawny fingers and clung to him, hissing out her wrath in his face like a wild cat.

"Die! who says Aurora shall die? Is she not mine, the grand-daughter of a count? Who shall condemn her but myself? When I have said she is guilty, then you may talk of wrong—not before. Go home. How dare you follow my grand-daughter when she goes about her work!"

But the gipsy shook her off, wrenching the knife from her clutch with a violence that flung her to the ground.

She started fiercely up. The red turban had fallen from her grey hairs, and they streamed around her like a torn banner that has once been white. Her eyes gleamed and flashed with lurid fire. She flung up her long, flail-like arms, and shrieked forth curses that seemed absolutely to blast the air around like a simoon. She spoke in Rommany, but the curses that came seething from her heart were more horrible to the Englishman, than if he had understood the words. They cowed even the gipsy chief. He gave up his knife abjectly, and casting a fierce, sullen look on the Englishman, slunk away.

This sullen submission appeased the Sibyl's fury. She followed him into the darkest portion of the cloister, and seemed to drop suddenly down from threats to expostulations, which ended at last in low, wheedling tones, which gradually died away in the melody of the fountain.

The Englishman looked around like one in a dream. Not fifteen minutes had elapsed since he sat in the *Sala de los Abencerrages*, with the Gitanilla so close to him that he could hear every full throb of her heart. Had she gone forever? That storm of fiendish passion which he had just witnessed, was it real? How still, how deliciously tranquil was the Alhambra! Had that soft moonlight looked but a moment since on the assassin's knife close to his own heart? It seemed an impossibility. He could not realize the terrible danger which even yet threatened him.

It was long before he could, by all the efforts of his strong

will, bring his thoughts under any degree of control. But he did not leave the place, for the first reasonable reflection aroused the keenest anxiety for the Gitanilla. Her fears of death were not all fancies then. He remembered the old Sibyl's words ; she had only claimed the right of vengeance as her own. The proof which he held in his own person, was enough to convince him that no laws could prevent crime in a people to whom most crimes are held as virtues. Had he not been plundered of property, and saved from death almost by a miracle, in spite of the Spanish laws ?

His anxiety regarding the poor gipsy girl became tormenting. Where could he seek her ? Not at the ravine ; surely she would not go there, knowing the fiendish inhabitants so well, and fearing all that she feared. The storm of her passion had been so violent it could not last. The poor child to save her own life must come back again. He would wait.

He did wait, hour after hour, till the moon went down, and nothing but the bright, holy stars kept watch over the Alhambra. He traversed the saloons, explored the cloisters, and leaving all that was beautiful behind him, wandered off among those dark red towers that harmonized better with the gloomy fears that possessed him.

Still he continued the search, clambering up those broken walls, tramping his way over wild flowers and weeds alike—called to a distance, sometimes, by the rustle of a bird, and mocked every instant by shadows that proved unreal as his hopes. But he would not believe that Aurora had left the ruins. Besides, rest was impossible. Alone in the little fonda he must have gone mad with anxiety.

Twenty times that night did he pass hurriedly through the Gate of Justice, hoping to find her returning from the woods. He searched the whole uneven sweep of those walls, clambering up the declivities, and finding relief in the physical exertion which covered his forehead and saturated his hair with moisture.

When the first rosy light of morning quivered on the snows

of Alpujarras, he returned to the little fonda so weary, so hopelessly dejected that he could hardly stand. His fate day had come round again.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BROKEN IDOL.

ANY person who had seen that old gipsy Sibyl tearing her way up the steep ascent of the Barranca that night, must have fancied some evil spirit had broken loose, and was searching for prey among the gaunt aloes and ragged prickly pears. The sharp hiss with which she rent her garments from the harrowing thorns—the fiendish energy with which she broke away from each fresh grasp, betrayed a state of tormenting wrath which Dante alone could describe. There was a force in this bitterness, a concentration of gall that imbued her withered frame through and through with frightful power. Her aged limbs quivered with new life—she walked upright, flung aside her stick, and, grasping the thorny plants firmly with her hands, drew herself up the hill. The sharp leaves cut her like a knife, tore her hands and drew long purple lines down her lean arms; but no blood followed. Her veins seemed withered up, or barely moistened by the gall that fed them with bitter vitality.

The ravine was choked up with darkness; the fires were all out, and the caves closed. Not a sparkle of the Darro could be seen through the black mist that lay below; and the soft winds that scattered fragrance from a wilderness of blossoms on the *Sierra del Sol*, whose palace was crowned by a few rays of light from the dusky moon, only served to stir the stifling dust, through which the fierce old Sibyl waded ankle deep.

With all her toil, the old woman held fast to her crimson skirt, which she gathered up in front and hugged to her bosom

attempting thus to keep a firm grasp on a mass of freshly gathered herbs, which protruded from its folds, scattering a fragrant odor upon the dusty air, as she crushed them tighter and tighter in her ascent up the hill.

At length she reached the door of her own cave and entered. The lamp which she had left burning in its niche was pouring forth a volume of mingled flame and smoke, and a few embers glowed still among the white ashes that lay in heaps under the brasier. A rustle of garments, a faint, shuddering shriek came from a dark angle of the cave as the door was flung open. The old Sibyl did not seem to heed it ; but turned her eyes that way with a look of blank ferocity, and moved on without appearing to regard my poor mother who sat cowering on the ground, her limbs gathered up beneath the gorgeous masses of her dress, and her great gleaming eyes following each movement of the crone with a scared and shrinking gaze, like those of an animal which feels itself bound for the slaughter.

As if unconscious that any living thing occupied the miserable dwelling with herself, the old woman shook the herbs from her garments, crouched down by the brasier, and, bending her crooked fingers like the claws of a bird, began to rake the scattered embers in a heap from the ashes, blowing them fiercely with her lips till her face was lighted up by the glow like that of a fiend. Half stifled with the smoke, she began to strangle, and her cough sounded through the cave like the bark of a dog. Still she would not leave her work, but sat down on the floor, straightened a fold of her dusty saya between her hands, and commenced blowing up the embers, till her breath came back again.

As the liquid in the bronze vase began to simmer, she gathered up the loose herbs, and after twisting them into fragments with a ferocity that sent their juice trickling through her fingers, she cast them into the vase. Sometimes, when the stems were tough, she employed her sharp teeth, wrangling with the poisonous fibres like a wild cat over its prey.

This was a fearful proof of the insane wrath that possessed

her, for she knew well the deadly nature of those herbs, yet remained insensible of the danger, even after her thin lips were swollen and turgid with the poison.

My poor mother, who had cowered in her corner watching all this, could endure the sight no longer ; but rising slowly up, crept to her little bed-room and softly closed the door. The old woman eyed her with a sidelong glance as she crept by, but preserved silence and occupied herself with her fire.

Thus an hour passed. Huge drops of perspiration stood on the forehead of my great grandame, for the cave was becoming insufferably warm, and she still bent over her work, imbibing the steam and heat with the endurance of a salamander. At last she lifted the vase from its supporter, and placing a broken bowl upon the floor, drained off perhaps half a pint of dark liquid. This she held up to the lamp and examined closely. A gleam of horrid satisfaction was visible on her face, and she muttered,

“ *They* think of distilling the drao—who gave them the secret? Let them boast—let them fancy that the old woman is of no further use. They must come to her for their poison yet. Who else of all the tribe knows the secret, or could distil death into one sweet drop like this?”

She bent over the bowl; her head drooped. For the first time she appeared to think steadily, and mingle her thoughts with something of human feeling.

The fire went out. Heavy smoke, for which there was no outlet, gathered in a cloud of palpable darkness over her head. The poison stood cooling by her side, imbued by a thick, inky blackness, taken, as it were, from her thought; yet, for the first time that night, there was something of human feeling mingled with the bitterness of her nature. It might have been the pale, frightened face of my mother, as she glided by, that awoke a gleam of womanly regret in her fierce bosom. It might have been the memory of some foregone event which this poor child had shared with her; or the sobs that began to issue from the little bed-room, like the stifled moan of an infant, might have softened the iron of her nature.

It is impossible for me to say which of the thousand strings in that sere heart thrilled to the touch of the guardian angel that always, while there is life, finds some tone of music in a woman's soul. But one thing is certain, the lurid fire in those wicked eyes grew dull, and was smothered as they watched the poison drao curdle and cool beneath them.

And there was my wretched mother, all this time shut up in the little stifled hole that she called a bed-room. Up to this time, a sort of wild excitement had kept her up. Indignation, terror, a conflict of feelings, which in her return from the Alhambra had given her the speed and strength of a reindeer, still burned in her heart like fire. But the stillness of the cave—the slow, silent preparations which that old woman was making for her death—all had a power to chill even her burning excitement. The heart in her bosom seemed turning to stone. Her limbs began to shrink and quiver with physical dread. She was but a woman, poor thing, nay, a child almost, and death was terrible to her, for the Spanish Gipsy has no bright dream of an after-life. They who suffer so much in this world have no hope in death, but that of black oblivion. Why should they wish to prolong misery so griping? Would they not be proscribed, crushed, trampled on through all eternity? Would the Busne grant them a place in heaven, they who have hunted our whole race up and down, till it has been glad to find shelter like serpents in the very bosom of the earth?

My mother was afraid to die. The torture that she then endured seemed preferable to that black, stony, eternal sleep, which the end of life was to her.

In her bed-room was a mutilated fragment of black marble. It was, or had been, the body of a beast joined to a human head. Though worn with time, hacked and broken, the grave, thoughtful beauty of that countenance, the solemn thought that seemed frozen into the stone, imbuing every fragment, must have won attention even from a person who looked upon it only as an antique of wonderful beauty.

This fragment of Egyptian art stood upon the base of a

Roman pedestal, which the old Sibyl had found years before among the broken rubbish of the Alhambra. It was of a time coeval with the Roman altar, which you may yet find embedded in the Torre del Homenage, and had a value to the antiquarian of which my great grandame was fully aware. Though she would have sold anything for money, this had been an offering to her idol; and she, almost alone among our people, still kept a traditionary hold upon the faith of Egypt. How she became possessed of this antique I never knew; but it was the only thing on earth which she held sacred, and to that she rendered idolatrous devotion.

As my mother sat upon her pallet bed, feeling the unnatural strength ebb from her frame, her eyes fell upon this marble face, turned with its grand serenity of expression toward her. All at once it seemed as if she had found a friend. She remembered the old Sibyl's faith in this block of stone, and gazed upon it with strange interest. The tumult of her feelings was hushed. The natural yearning, which exists in every female heart, for something to adore, something strong and high, from which she can claim protection, possessed her. She folded her hands in her lap and leaned forward, gazing on the marble face till her eyes were full of tears. Directly she began to sob like a child, and this was the sound that reached the old woman as she bent over her drao.

But that hard old heart soon shook off its human emotions. Brutus was not more stern in his sense of justice, nor did he show less of relenting; the laws of her people must be carried out. She would yield the power of life or death over her grandchild to no inferior member of her tribe; she alone would be judge and executioner. Perhaps there was something of mercy in this; the death she gave with her drao was easy, almost delightful; a sleepy, voluptuous languor seized upon the victim, grew sweeter, deeper, and eternal.

Such was the fate meditated for the poor girl who was sobbing in the next room. The tribe would have stoned her to death. That old Sibyl had a touch of compassion in her mur-

derous designs, but she was not the less determined to kill. She took up the drao and set it in the same niche with the swaling lamp. Then she passed into the-bed room softly as a cat, closing the door after her with great caution, as if they two had not been quite alone.

The poor Gitanilla sat, upon her miserable pallet, looking wistfully toward that antique relic of old Egypt ; but she cowered down with a faint cry, as the old woman crept between her and the marble, lifting up one hand as if denouncing her for looking upon a thing that she held in reverence. What passed in that miserable little room I cannot say. My mother never spoke of it ; and in her manuscript there was nothing when it came to this part of her story, but great inky scrawls that no one on earth could read.

When the old Sibyl came forth Aurora was upon the ground, her forehead resting against the idol, and murmuring some wild words through a passion of tears.

"Repeat," said the Sibyl, standing over her, and holding up the heavy iron lamp that flared lividly over the mutilated features of the marble and the wild face of the Gitanilla. "Say it again, thus with your face where it is. If there is a lie on your lips that stone will sear them as with a red hot iron."

"Oh, grandame, I have spoken truth, nothing but truth. See !" and with a sort of insane awe she pressed her lips upon the broken mouth of the idol two or three times.

The old woman was silent. The lamp shook in her hand ; her eyes were fixed upon the idol and the poor creature that clung to it, as if she really expected to see that healthy form fall crisped and withered away from the stone.

The girl turned, clasped her grandame around the knees, and lifting up her eyes, in which was a gleam of wild confidence, exclaimed :

"I am unhurt—I am unhurt—grandame, will you believe me now ?"

Still the old woman was silent.

"Grandame, mother of my mother, you will not let me die !"

Terror and doubt again took possession of the poor thing. She clung closer to the old woman, her eyes dusky with fear ; her lips growing pale again.

"Chaleco must have your life—he will not believe you ; no, nor will the women of our tribe !"

"But you believe me, grandame !"

"And if I do, what then ?"

"You have great power, grandame ; our people acknowledge it ; the stars make you their mistress. You will save me from Chaleco—from our fierce women"—

"How, little one, how ? I am old, they would wrest you from my arms. They treat me like an infant already."

"Let us leave them and seek the mountains, you and I, grandame. They will not follow us up into the snow peaks !"

"To-night I have clambered up to the Alhambra. It is the first time in ten years ; to-morrow my bones will be as stiff as rusted iron. How am I to drag myself up to the mountains ? How am I, a count's wife, to leave his people ?"

"I am a count's daughter, but they wish to kill me !" answered the poor girl, sadly. "You will not let them—say, grandame, that you will save me from the Valley of Stones !"

"They are many and strong—I an old woman, feeble with years !"

"They will stone me—oh, they will stone me ! and I am innocent of all they think against me !" still pleaded the Gitanilla.

The old woman was evidently troubled. She shook her head, and cast wistful glances on her broken idol, as if interrogating the stone.

"Let me go by myself, then," cried the girl, eagerly. "I am told that countries stretch far away beyond the mountains. There they will not know that I am an outcast, and my dancing will get bread enough to eat."

The old woman did not heed her ; she was still interrogating the Egyptian stone. Quick flashes of intelligence shot across her face ; some project was evidently taking form in her brain.

"He will not believe me—Chaleco will be first among them with his story. I have no power to brave the laws, but I can baffle them. Leave old Papita alone for that."

Now she seemed all alive with eager cunning, turning from the force of her bitter wrath into a crafty old crone, anxious to save the life of her grandchild, it is true, but exulting as much in the thoughts of baffling all the keen hate and power of her tribe.

"Get up, little one: come sit down here on the bed by my side, and let us talk," she said, passing her hand over the head of my mother, and caressing her with a grim smile.

"You believe me innocent—you will not let them murder me."

"Yes, yes, my star, I *know* you are innocent—else, you see the drao yonder—by this time it had been curdling in your blood."

"Then you will save me! Who is so powerful? Oh, grandame, your little girl will yet live. Who shall dare to contradict the will of Papita?"

"He, Chaleco! ha! ha! he almost braved me to-night: but he shall be brought round"——

The girl turned faint, and grew paler than she had been before that night.

"No, not that!—oh, not that! Let me die, grandmother—let me die. I would rather a thousand times than marry Chaleco."

The Sibyl laughed till her teeth shone again.

"Marry Chaleco now!—why, child, he would strangle me if I but hinted it! Oh, our people are wise in this generation, wiser than old Papita. We shall see—we shall see!"

"What shall I do, grandame? What can you think of to save me? They will tear me to pieces."

"What shall I do?—why, take my right as a count's widow—murder you myself—bury you myself!"

"Grandame!" exclaimed the child, with a cry of horror.

"And when they think your body deep in the Darro," con-

tinued the old crone, without noticing the cry, "Papita will be sitting here with gold in her lap, and her pretty little Aurora shall be married to the Busne, and far beyond the mountains!"

Another cry, in which the love of that young heart leaped forth in an agony of joy, made the Sibyl pause; but it was only for a moment.

"Then my little one shall think of the poor old gipsy in her cave, and send more gold—more and more, till power shall indeed return to Papita."

But my mother sat upon the pallet wringing her hands, and utterly abandoned to her grief once more. That one gleam of joy had turned upon her heart sharper than a sword. She remembered why she had fled from the Alhambra that night.

"What is this?" said the old woman, sharply. "Tears again? Bah, I am tired of them—speak!"

"Grandame," sobbed the wretched girl, gasping for breath, for she felt that her last hold on life was going, "the Busne cannot save me—he will not marry a gipsy girl."

"He shall!" snarled the old woman. "By that he shall!" and she pointed toward her idol.

"Grandame!" exclaimed the girl, astonished.

"Get up," replied the Sibyl—"smooth that hair—put on the bodice of blue velvet, and the saya edged with gold, that was to have been the wedding-dress with Chaleco. Quick, or the daylight will be upon us."

CHAPTER IX.

WAITING AND FEARING—A WILDERNESS OF BEAUTY.

AURORA obeyed her grandmother almost hopefully ; for her faith in the Sibyl was unbounded. In a little time she appeared in the outer cave, arranged in the picturesque costume which should have been her wedding-garments. The old woman had been pouring a quantity of the poison drao into a vial, which she thrust into her bosom as the girl came in.

"Why do you take that?" she faltered out, struck with new dread.

"It is for him—the Busne, if he falters in doing what I shall ask."

"Be it so," said my mother, sadly, pointing toward the bowl. "There will be enough left—I will go with him"——

"You must," answered the Sibyl, sharply. "Now come."

They left the cave, closing the door after them.

"Stay," exclaimed the old woman, going back, "you will want food and drink."

She was gone a little time, and returned with a bottle of water and some bread. These she handed to Aurora and walked on, moving down the ravine toward the Alhambra.

It was wonderful how much strength excitement had given to that old crone ; she scarcely seemed to feel the great fatigue of the night, but with a quick, scrambling walk led the way in silence, only calling back now and then for Aurora to move faster, or the day would be upon them.

They entered the enclosure of the Alhambra by *La Torre del Picó*, and kept within the shadows, for, though the moon was

down, it leaves a transparent atmosphere behind it in Granada; and once or twice the Sibyl fancied that she heard footsteps amid the ruins.

Near *La Torre del Pico* stood, at that time, the grand mosque of the Alhambra, the most exquisite remnant of Moorish art in the world. An entrance to this mosque was easy, for sacred as it had been, all its rich beauty lay exposed to ruin like the rest.

Papita led the way, holding my mother by the hand. A dim light fell amid the delicate pillars innumerable as the young trees in a forest, but guided by far-off memories, the Sibyl threaded them confidently as if she had been walking through her own barranca. She paused before that portion of the mosque formerly the seat occupied by the Moorish Kings in their worship. Here, by the gleam of azulejos, richer and far more brilliant than any to be found elsewhere in Spain, and which even the darkness could not subdue, she found the *Mih-rab* or recess in which the Alcoran had been kept.

It was a deep vaulted recess set thick with azulejos, that burned like gems on a bed of gold. The floor was a single slab of agate; and a belt of precious stones had spanned the arch like a petrified rainbow. It was broken and partly defaced now, but the very fragments were a marvel of beauty.

Another might have looked with reverence on a spot so enriched, that it might be worthy to hold the treasure kept most sacred by a fallen nation. But to the old gipsy woman such feelings and such things were a scoff.

"Hide yourself in there," she said, thrusting Aurora toward the niche. "You will be driven out by no Moors coming to worship; sit still if any one enters the mosque, or if steps turn this way, stand up close to one of the porphyry pillars yonder, moving so that it will be placed between you and the intruder whichever way he comes."

"But where do you go? How long must I wait?" said Aurora, placing her foot on the glittering pavement of the *Mih-rab*.

"I go to find him," was the terse answer. "Wait till *he* comes, or till *I* come. You have food ; be patient, and on your life, let none of the tribe find you !"

Aurora shrunk back into the recesses at this command, and stood there motionless as stone till daylight glittered upon the azulejos around her, and she was shrined, as it were, in a mass of living gems.

At length the terror that had kept her so motionless gave way. She changed her position ; sat down, began counting the exquisite fragments that jewelled the wall, tracing the delicate lines of gold and silver that crept like glittering moss around them, with the tip of her fingers. At last, emboldened by the silence, she stepped down from the recess, and wandered restlessly around the body of the mosque.

Notwithstanding the great causes for anxiety that beset her, and though she had been in that spot before, she wandered through its gorgeous mazes with a strange and delicious swell of the heart. Love, the great magician, had unsealed her eyes to the beautiful. Never before had she distinguished the grand and varied richness of those columns. The deep, many-tinted greens engroined in the verd-antique, jasper of that rare kind which seems clouded with blood, grew beautiful in her eyes. She saw pillars of oriental alabaster rising among the forest of columns, like snow mellowed to golden richness by a meridian sun ; and others with sweeping clouds of the deepest ruby tint, stained into a ground of dusky yellow. These mingled with columns of glittering black, or sheeted from floor to arch with gold, contrasted gorgeously with the snow-white shafts that rose on every hand ; some with capitals, dashed lightly with gold ; others cut, as it were, from solid pearl, and all made precious with the most perfect sculpture.

Filled, as I have said, with a new-born sense of the Beautiful, my mother wandered through all this Byzantine gorgeousness, amazed that she had never seen it before. With no knowledge of architecture, she *felt* without understanding the beautiful proportions of the building, while her eyes were fixed

upon its pillars supporting arches graceful as the bend of a rainbow, and enriched with a beauty hitherto unknown even to Moorish art.

Her heart was numb for the time, and she wandered on like one in a dream—now looking upon the pavement, then lifting her eyes upward where traceries of snow, delicate as a spider's web, but yet of a pearly richness, linked with blossoms of silver, ran through the arches, chaining the pillars together with a gleaming network. The doors, the royal seat, everything around was one blaze of rich mosaic—the pavement of white marble, starred with gorgeous tiles, spread away beneath her feet. Broken, soiled by neglect, in ruins, as all this was, perhaps it seemed but the more enchanting for that ! for to a keen imagination these fragments of beauty were suggestive of an ideal perfection, which no art ever reached. But my mother could not long be won from the great causes of anxiety that surrounded her. Her heart began to ache again, and with a weary step she sought the *Mih-rab*, and seating herself on the agate floor, sat pondering over her own miserable thoughts till the sun went down.

With strained eyes and a weary heart, she saw the rich light fade away from the pillars till the arches were choked up with blackness, and all the slender columns seemed like spectres crowding toward her hiding-place. She grew feverish with anxiety ; her lips were parched ; a faintness crept through her frame. It was not hunger, but she was exhausted, and remembering the food her grandame had left, felt for it in the darkness.

She drank of the water, and tasted a mouthful of bread ; but it was suspense, not want of food, that had taken away her strength. She could not endure to look out from her hiding-place, for now that crowd of pillars seemed like men of her tribe, all greedy and athirst for her young life.

Thus she remained ; it might be hours or minutes ; it seemed an eternity to her, and then she heard footsteps and a voice.

CHAPTER X.

THE COURIER AND HIS WILD VISITOR.

AT a back door of the little Fonde, which stands within the enclosures of the Alhambra, sat a little old man, or if not absolutely old, so withered and shrunk up that it was impossible, at a little distance, not to think him aged. But at a close view you saw, by the sharp black eyes, the thin, but unwrinkled lips, and a certain elasticity of movement, that he had scarcely passed the middle age of life. A coat of drab cloth, with short-clothes of the same material, a plush waistcoat, knee and shoe-buckles of gold, and silk stockings, at once swept away all idea of his being a native of Granada, and to an experienced eye proclaimed him the retainer of some old English family. Besides all this, there was an air of rather peculiar nicety in his apparel. His cravat was richly ruffled with lace, and flowed down ostentatiously over the waistcoat. His wristbands were of the same costly material, with here and there a slight fray or break, which gave suspicion of some previous and more exalted ownership.

He sat upon a little wooden bench, with the branches of a fine mulberry tree bending over and protecting him from the rising sun. Brushes and blacking lay near one end of the bench, and on a drooping branch of the mulberry tree hung a gentleman's coat nicely brushed and left to the air.

From the spotless purity of his dress, you would have believed it impossible that this dainty-looking servant could have been performing the menial services which these objects would indicate; but at the very instant we present him to our readers, Turner had his left hand thrust up to the sole of a delicately

shaped boot, and with the lightest and most graceful touch imaginable, was polishing it. Now and then he paused, looked at himself in the glittering surface, and fell to work again, not quite satisfied that the beloved image was thrown back with sufficient distinctness. He did not sing at his work. Turner took everything quite too seriously for that ; still he kept up a faint, broken hum to the sound of his brush when in motion ; but sometimes paused all at once, and fell into a reverie, holding the brush and boot in his hands, as if not entirely pleased with his ruminations.

At length the boot that he had been polishing seemed to be susceptible of no further brilliancy, and after holding it up to the sun and eyeing it with great satisfaction, he set it down, muttering, " Now for the other ! " He drew out from beneath his bench the tattered and soiled mate, and held it up with a disgustful shake of the head. " Alhambra dust—I'll swear to it—one, two, three—bah, it's no use counting. Every night up there——" Here he began to scatter the dust from his master's boots with angry vehemence.

" In search of the picturesque—fond of ruins—who believes it, I should like to know ? One man don't, I'm sure of that, and his name is Turner, Thomas Turner, of Greenhurst, but perhaps his opinion don't amount to much ; we shall see ! "

Here Turner worked on, pressing his thin lips hard, and dashing away at the boot as if it had offended him mortally.

" Out all night—the whole entire night—comes home at break of day, and steals through old Turner's room like a thief. Thought the old man asleep, as if Turner ever slept when things are going wrong with the boy."

Here the old man grew languid in his movements ; his eyes took a sadder expression, and his touch upon the boot was like a caress.

" Fear, why who knows what won't come over him with these doings ? His coat soaked with dew and stuck full of briars ; his hair dripping with perspiration—everything at sixes and sevens ; and instead of sleeping when he does get home,

rolling about on his bed and trying to cheat the old man; lets him take away his clothes without saying a word; makes believe he's asleep, as if I didn't see that forehead working as it always does when things go wrong with him. He thinks to cheat old Turner—fudge !”

As the old man ceased, more and more earnest, his application to the boot became exciting enough; his elbow went to and fro like the play of a crank; his thin lips were gathered up into a knot, and he looked sternly around upon the coat and mulberry tree, as if challenging them to mortal combat.

That moment the little impish figure of an old woman, with a red kerchief twisted over her mummy-like forehead, and a faded dress of the same color, came suddenly round a corner of the Fonde, and stood eyeing him with a glance sharp and vigilant, like that of a rattlesnake at rest.

Turner gave her a sidelong look over the instep of his boot as he held it up for inspection, but the weird sharpness of her glance was too much, even for his immovable *sang froid*. His eyes sunk, and he began to gather up the brushes as if in preparation for a retreat.

The old woman came close up and addressed him in Spanish. He understood the language well enough, but either from cunning, or that inveterate hatred of everything French or Spanish which we often find among English travelling servants, continued gathering up his property as if he did not comprehend a word.

After uttering a few sentences, half cajoling, half imperative, the woman turned away, muttering discontentedly between her teeth, and was about entering the back door.

“Halloo, where are you going now?” cried old Turner, satisfied that silence would no longer answer his purpose. “Where are you going, old witch? not into my lord’s room, surely !”

This was spoken in very respectable Spanish, though with a sort of rude snappishness that mingled his hatred of the language with every syllable.

"So you *can* speak," answered the woman, with an oath, that springs to a gipsy's lips naturally as flame leaps from burning wood.

"Yes, I can speak your lingo when I choose to demean myself particularly, and that isn't often," replied Turner, with considerable vexation, that he had unwarily been drawn into speaking the hated language. "But what do you want, old beauty? Nothing of my lord, or old Turner, I hope?"

"I want the Busne."

"The what?" cried Turner, looking toward the door, and kicking the brushes on one side.

"The Busne."

"And who on earth is that, my precious old nettle?"

The old woman answered by a gesture of sharp impatience, and moved toward the door.

"Stop that," cried Turner, placing himself on the narrow threshold, and brandishing the glossy boot with one hand. "No one passes in here till I know what his business is. Speak up now, my precious old beauty. What's your name? Who do you want? What on earth do you mean by coming here at all?"

The old woman stood on the threshold alone, eyeing him keenly, and glancing now and then with the cunning of her race on each side of his person, to measure the possibility of passing him. But Turner was equally vigilant, and manfully kept his post, boot in hand.

"Better come to terms at once: no one gets through here without giving a passport, I can tell you that," said Turner. "Is it me you come after?"

"You!" sneered the old woman, and her thin lip curled upward, revealing the sharp, hound-like teeth beneath. "You!"

"And why not, she-wolf? It wouldn't be the first of woman-kind that has run after the gentleman before you."

"I want the young gentlemen—the Busne who lodges here. Let me go by, for I will see him!"

"Easy, easy," persisted Turner, giving a semi-circular sweep

with his boot. "There is but one lodger here, and that is my lord. You can't see him, because he is in bed."

"No matter : he must get up then !"

"Must get up!—now I like that—my master will like it—do him good to hear the word *must* ; hasn't known the sound since he was a creeping baby ; still, and nevertheless, my sweet witch of Endor, not having a fancy to get my head broken for teaching forgotten lessons, I shan't step from this spot till you go back to the master who sent you, and just have the goodness to say from old Turner, that we have given up all dealings with him or his imps long ago."

"I *will* see the Busne," answered the Sibyl, clenching her hand till it looked like a gnarled oak knot. "Curses rest upon you—I will see him."

"And just add by way of private information," said Turner, as if her last speech had escaped him entirely, "that if he has a fancy to get us into mischief, there would be wisdom in sending a younger face. It is astonishing how strong a man's principles become, what a deal of energy is given to his conscience when temptation takes a shape like yours. The amount of morality that lies in the contemplation of a face like a withered prune, and a form like a good English faggot, is wonderful !"

My great grandame was very, very aged. You will believe it when I tell you that these jeers on her person had no effect whatever. She did not even feel that they were intended for her, but determined in her resolve to penetrate to the young Englishman, she interrupted Turner's philosophical soliloquy with an impatient dash of her person toward the space left open at his right hand. A slight scuffle ensued, in which the gipsy buried her claw-like nails deep into the flesh of her antagonist's right arm, while he dropped the boot and grasped her lean throat with a force that made the breath gurgle from her lips.

That instant the sound of a voice from within the Fonde arrested the combatants, and after giving a farewell twist to the old woman's neck, and wrenching his arm from the grapple

of her fingers, which fell away with a blood tinge on the nails, Turner flung her off and disappeared through a side door that opened near the entrance.

CHAPTER XI.

A TRAVELLER'S TOILET.

IN a little sleeping room, whitewashed till the walls looked like a snow drift, and carpeted with thick rush matting, he found Lord Clare sitting upon the side of a low camp bed, and looking hopelessly around for the garments which we have seen fluttering upon the mulberry boughs, and in the possession of Turner. A beautiful dressing-case, with its rich apparatus of gold, lay open on a little table. Above it hung a very small and very uncertain mirror, which gave to the beholder's face the effect of a slight paralytic shock, sending one corner of the mouth shooting up toward the eyes, and another wandering off in search of the left shoulder. Lord Clare had evidently attempted to commence his own toilet, but one glance at the mirror, which appalled him with the apparition of a maniac leering over a razor, which he was brandishing as if to cut his own throat, terminated his labors at the first stage.

"Turner, take that glass away," said the young lord, as his servant entered, "and bring me something that will throw back the features of a Christian. This makes me look like a fiend."

"I shouldn't wonder," muttered the servant, "everything is going crooked with us; and perhaps the looking-glass gives back the truth nearer than we calculate."

"What are you saying, Turner?" questioned the young lord, in that quiet, gentle tone with which very proud men are apt to address inferiors.

"A little private conversation between me and the looking-glass, my lord ; nothing else."

"It must be a very distorted argument," said the master, smiling ; "but, Turner, I heard voices at the door—what was it ? You seemed disputing with some one."

"Nothing of the sort my lord. "I don't know any one in this pestilential country worth disputing with."

"But surely there was more than your voice ; I heard another distinctly, and it seemed like that of a woman."

"Of a fiend, my lord—an imp of darkness—an old she-wolf. Look, here are the marks of her claws on my arm ; they bit through to the bone."

"A gipsy woman ?" asked Lord Clare, turning pale ; "an old weird creature that looks like a child withered to the bone. Was that the person who assailed you ?"

"Exactly, my lord, I couldn't have drawn her portrait better. You may hear her prowling about the door yet ; but no fear, two bolts are drawn between us !"

"And what does she want ?" asked Lord Clare, in a low and agitated voice.

"Your lordship, nothing less," replied Turner.

"Is she alone ?"

"Visibly, yes ; but heaven only knows how many of her infernal sisterhood may swarm around her in the air."

"Does she seem excited—unusually so ?"

"Here is an endorsement for that," replied Turner, stretching forth his arm, and touching the sleeve of his coat, through which a drop or two of blood had oozed.

"Bring my clothes here, and when I am dressed let her come in," said Lord Clare, abruptly ; "I must see her—I must know what has been done," he added, in an under tone. "Thank heaven ! the terrible suspense will be over."

Turner hesitated, he evidently had some dislike of encountering the Sibyl again, valiant as he was.

"If I open the door she will rush in—the old hyena."

"No, no, address her mildly," answered Clare ; "say that I

will receive her the moment my toilet is made. If she is restive, pacify her with a piece of gold ; but go at once, I am impatient for this scene to be over."

Turner looked at his coat-sleeve, shook his head, and cautiously undid the bolt. As he had expected, the Sibyl stood outside in the passage, her eyes blazing with fury, her whole frame quivering with impatient wrath.

"Not yet, my diamond of Golconda," said Turner, putting her back with his left hand, while he locked the door and drew forth the key. "Cultivate patience, darling, it is a Christian virtue, very respectable and worth having ; anybody's servant in England can tell you that."

"Your master, the Busne. Have you told him I am here ?" inquired the Sibyl, subduing her evil nature into a vicious wheedle more repulsive than open malice.

"Yes, I have told him the honor intended."

"What did he say ?"

"That you are to take this piece of gold to gloat over while he is dressing !"

"And then he will see me ?" cried the old woman tossing the gold away as if in contempt of a bribe. "Tell him I am the widow of a count !"

"He feels the honor, no doubt—I have had touching proofs."

Turner glanced at his arm, and then at the old woman's throat. The dusky red which circled it like a collar satisfied him. He turned away chuckling, and went forth to collect his master's garments.

The moment he was gone the old gipsy turned her eyes upon the guinea that she had cast aside. Her fingers began to work ; a cold gloating light came into her eyes, and creeping toward the gold as if it had been a serpent fascinating her, she clutched it eagerly, and buried it deep in her bosom.

When Turner came back he saw that the gold had disappeared, and, smiling grimly, entered his lord's chamber, satisfied that the Sibyl was quieted for a time at least.

A less keen observer than his old valet might have seen that Lord Clare was greatly agitated while his toilet was in progress. He moved restlessly; his cheeks blazed and faded by turns; his voice grew sharp and imperative, a thing which Turner scarcely ever remembered to have witnessed before. He seemed particularly annoyed by the valet's rather stubborn desire to elaborate his dress, and finally ordered Turner to bring in the Sibyl and leave him.

This injunction was anything but satisfactory to the old man. Both in manner and substance it was annoying. He felt that the key to all the mysterious movements of his master, during the last month, lay in the Sibyl, who so peremptorily claimed audience of his master. Turner was greatly puzzled and highly displeased. He felt as if his master and the gipsy were depriving him of his just rights and natural perquisites in thus securing a private interview. He went forth muttering his discontent. The old woman's inflamed throat gave him a gleam of comfort, and satisfying himself more and more that she was a dangerous person to be left alone with his master, he stationed himself very close to the door after she entered, so close that a suspicious person might have supposed him listening, especially as he had left the door very slightly ajar.

But my great-grandame outmatched him over and over again in this sort of cunning. Before advancing into the room where the Englishman sat waiting for her, she closed the door and drew a bolt inside, at which Turner flung indignantly away, and took his seat on a bench beneath his lord's window, which was open, and the muslin curtain flowing softly over it.

But scarcely had he seated himself when the window was shut down with a crash, and the curtains drawn close. Then Turner fell back against the side of the house, and struggled with the Sibyl no longer, satisfied, as most men are who essay the experiment, that in a fair struggle of wit, tact, or management, few men ever come out successfully against a woman, young or old, fair or otherwise.

CHAPTER XII.

TEMPTATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS.

MEANTIME the old gipsy stood face to face with the Englishman, who regarded her with an appearance of ease which an anxious gleam of the eyes contradicted.

"One word," he said, breaking through all restraints as she was about to address him—"one word before you speak of other things. Is Aurora safe? Is it to tell me this, or ask her at my hands that you come?"

The Sibyl was pleased with his agitation and his eagerness. It promised well for her mission.

"Aurora is safe!" she answered, and it was wonderful how the usual fierce tones of her voice were modulated. Nothing could be more respectful, nay, winning, than her every look and tone. "Aurora is safe as yet—but our people have arisen; they will not be satisfied till her blood reddens the Valley of Stones."

"But you—you—oh, heavens—you cannot see this done. Poor child, she is innocent as a flower."

"They do not believe it!"

"But you believe it—her grandame—you will be his friend."

"There is but one way—only one in the world, I have come to say this. You alone can save her from the fury of our tribe!"

"How can I save her? Point out the way, and if it is to purchase her life with my own, speak, and I will do it."

"You must leave Granada to-night, and take my grandchild with you!"

The young man's eyes fell, and the rich color burned, like

fire, in his cheeks; but he remembered the scene that had passed that night in the Alhambra, and shook his head.

"She will not go ! I could not persuade her to be saved on these terms," he said.

"No, not on the terms you are thinking of. I would see her torn limb from limb before my eyes; yea, help to rend her to death, rather than see her live the shame of her people; but there is another way. Sometimes the rich men of our people have married among the Gentiles. If men take that privilege, it belongs to our women also. Make Aurora your wife according to the marriage rites of the tribe; go with her privately to your own country—leave the old woman gold enough to keep her from starving, and she will be content."

"But would this appease your tribe? Would they again receive Aurora?" questioned the young man.

"No; they believe her a castaway; marriage would be no atonement. I know that she is not the thing they suspect; but it would be of no use attempting to convince them. Do what I wish, and they will believe her dead. They cannot take from me the right of a count's widow to punish those of her own blood with her own hands, privately or not as she wills. They will think that I have given her of the drao, and that she lies in the bottom of the Darro."

The young man was greatly agitated. He paced the room to and fro; then he sat down, veiling his eyes with his hand, and fell into labored thought. At length he lifted his eyes to the old woman, who had been regarding him all the time in anxious and vigilant silence.

"Will Aurora consent to this?"

"Will the ring-dove fly to her covert when she sees the fowler's gun pointed to her breast?"

"Last night she left me in anger!"

"Since last night she has felt what would have withered common hearts to a cinder," replied the Sibyl. "At sunset she was a child! The morning light found her a woman. Like an earthquake, terror and suffering have turned all the fresh soil

of her nature uppermost. She is of the pure blood, and that is old and strong as wine that has been forgotten centuries in a vault."

"But if I consent to your plan—which certainly promises safety to the poor child—it will be but the very thing in fact that I myself proposed last night. No marriage ceremony which you recognize would be held binding among my people."

"What have we to do with your people? What do we care if they recognize our marriage rites or not?" answered the Sibyl, haughtily. "It is not their opinion that we regard, but our own. If *I* am content—I, her nearest relative—who shall dare to cast scorn upon my child, because she defies all laws but those of her own people?"

For a moment the young man's eyes flashed; but the excitement was momentary. His face became grave and stern; his heart grew heavy, and he shrunk within himself as a proud nature always must, when it comes in possession of a wrong wish.

"Understand me perfectly," he said. "If I submit to this ceremony, whatever it may be, it will not be considered a marriage among my countrymen. Aurora will never be received as my wife—have no claim on my property save that which I may, of my own free consent, bestow, and in all things her position must depend on my will, my sense of honor. She will not even be looked on with respect; I can give her home, shelter, gold, affection, care, but my wife she cannot be."

"What Gitana ever was respected by the Busne? We are not fools enough to demand it," said the old woman bitterly. "As for your laws, we despise them—your gold, surely no woman of our people desires more than her husband chooses to give; your whole nation—what is it to us but a curse and a thing to be abhorred? Could my poor Aurora go back to her tribe in safety, you should not have her for a ton's weight of the yellowest gold ever sifted from the Darro. No, I ask that ceremony which *we* hold binding, nothing more, save that I may not be left to starve, and Aurora is yours."

"But I shall be free by the law to marry another," said the young man, forcing himself to lay all the painful points of the case before the Sibyl, thus relieving the clamors of his conscience.

"You *dare* not marry another, law or no law. Aurora is of my blood," answered the Sibyl, and the blaze of her fiery heart broke over her face. "A strong will makes its own laws and defends its own rights. You dare not marry another, she will not permit it. I will not."

"Heaven forbid that my sweet Gitanilla should ever inherit the fierce nature of her grandame, or my chances of happiness were small, indeed," said the Englishman, inly. Then addressing the Sibyl, he added, almost solemnly, "no man should promise for himself in the future. I am powerless to answer for my conduct to your grandchild beyond the present feelings of my heart, the immediate promptings of my conscience. It seems to me now impossible that I should ever wrong the trust you both place in me—impossible that any other should ever step between her heart and mine. God only knows what is in the future," he continued, with mournful sadness, "or how the past may break in and color it."

He seemed about sinking into a reverie, one of those to which he had been accustomed, and which gave a serious cast to a character naturally ardent and impulsive. But the old gipsy grew impatient, and broke in with something of her native asperity, which had been kept in abeyance during the entire conversation.

"It is getting late—have you decided, Busne?" she said, without once removing her eyes, which had been reading him to the soul. Doubts, struggles, hesitations, all that went to make up the flood of contending feelings that raged beneath his calm, almost sad exterior, she had been keenly regarding.

"I *have* decided," answered the young man, in a firm, but very sad voice, "God knows I would have saved her otherwise, if possible! When and where must this ceremony take place? Not in presence of the tribe; that I cannot submit to."

The gipsy uttered one of her sharp, bitter laughs.

"They would kill her and you. No, no, they will think her dead. Before dawn we went out together; I shall go home *alone*—they will understand. It is not the first time that old Papita has done that, and always after, those who sought, have found traces of her work—I shall leave them now. Fragments of Aurora's dress are clinging to the brambles where the Darro runs deepest. They will find footsteps also ground into the soil, and tangles of black hair. They know Aurora's hair by the purple gloss."

"But she, Aurora, tell me what you have done with her?" inquired the young man, half terrified by these details.

"She is safe. When the night comes, be ready, and I will take you where she is."

"At what hour?"

"Close to midnight, when you see the fires go out along the Barranco, expect me."

"I will."

"Have mules in readiness, and a disguise for the Gitanilla; something that our people may not fathom readily."

"It will be easy," said Clare, after a moment's thought; "my page died on the coast—Turner must have his garments somewhere among my luggage—I will speak with him."

"Gold will be wanted," said the gipsy, fixing her hungry glance on the young man with a meaning he could not possibly misunderstand. He stepped to a desk that lay in its leather case in a corner of the room, and took out several rolls of English guineas, enough to fill one hand.

"When you want more, here is an address; ask freely. Would to God all else were as easy as this," he said, muttering the latter words in his own language, and placing a strip of paper, on which he had hastily written, in her hand.

The Sibyl's eyes gleamed, and for the first time he saw a smile of genuine satisfaction flash over her face.

"Oh! this is something like: the Busne is magnificent," she exclaimed, eagerly concealing the gold in her dress. "Now

they cannot starve old Papita like a sick hound in its kennel—this is power, and she can defy them. Let them question her if they dare—let them revile her if they have the courage, and say her grandchild had the death of shame. What does Papita care while she has gold and the drao secret.”

The young man smiled faintly. He could not comprehend this fierce passion for gain in a creature left tottering upon the brink of her grave so long, with all her bad passions still retaining their keen edge. He, to whom wealth came freely as the air, could little understand how want and penury, from which in this world gold alone can save us, grinds down the most generous nature. He despised the old gipsy woman in his soul; but had he suffered as she had done, in what might he have been superior? It is easy to scorn the sin to which we have no temptation.

Eager to count over her gold—more than satisfied with her morning’s success, my great grandame left the Fonde chuckling to herself, and hugging her treasure with both arms fondly as a mother caresses her child. On her way down the hill she met Turner, who eyed her like an angry mastiff, and muttered to himself in English something that she did not understand. He stood looking after her as she disappeared among the trees, but she was busy with her gold, and cared nothing for his scrutiny.

“Turner,” said Lord Clare, as that functionary entered the Fonde.

“My lord !” was the terse reply, and by the very tone in which it was uttered Clare saw that the moment was unpropitious for his orders, and he gave them, with a faint blush and some hesitation.

“Turner, you will settle with the people here ; pack up, and be ready to start at a moment’s notice.”

“Which way, my lord ?”

When Turner was out of sorts his words were very few, and those few came forth with jerks, as if he plucked them up one by one from the depths of his bosom.

“I—I have not quite determined. Across to Malija, perhaps.”

"Humph !"

"This does not seem to please you, Turner."

"What right has a servant to be pleased, I should like to know?" was the gruff rejoinder,

"When an old servant is a faithful friend too, we like to see him satisfied," said Clare, in a voice that no woman could have resisted. But Turner felt his advantage. He saw that his master kept something back which he hesitated to speak out, and so resolved not to soften his embarrassment in the least.

"We shall require three saddle mules, the best that can be found in Granada," said the master, at length.

"Three ! humph !" ejaculated Turner again.

"And others for the luggage," persisted the young man, more decidedly.

Turner bowed stiffly. He understood this change in his master's tone, and did not like to brave him beyond a certain point. After a moment Clare spoke again.

"You have the clothes that the boy William left, I suppose?" he said, but without looking his old serving man in the face as usual.

"Yes, I have them, my lord."

"Very well—leave them out—they will be wanted. I take a new page with me from hence."

Turner did not speak now, but his features fell, and with a grave air, perfectly respectful, but full of rebuke, he stood looking at his young master.

"Have you a wish to discharge old Turner?" said the servant, at length, choking back the emotions that seemed forcing the words from his throat.

"Discharge you, Turner ; why, you wouldn't go if I did," cried the young lord, forcing a laugh.

"Humph !" groaned the old man ; "perhaps it will be vice versa—who knows?"

The blood rushed into Lord Clare's face, but before he could speak, Turner left the room.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE WEIRD WEDDING.

"TURNER !"

"My lord !"

"Have you prepared the dress I spoke of?"

"It is ready : what shall I do with it, my master?"

"Leave it in my room. The preparations, are they all made?"

"All."

"And you will be ready to start at a moment's warning, night or day?"

"The mules are saddled now ; every thing packed !"

"It is well ; I shall not want you again for some hours. As we leave Granada so soon, you may have friends to part with, something to purchase. Go into the city if you desire."

"Thank you, my lord !" replied Turner, with more than ordinary meekness ; "I am much obliged by the permission."

The young earl looked up suddenly. There was a dryness in Turner's voice that he did not like, but the immovable face of the old man revealed nothing. He touched his hat with military brevity and moved away, measuring his long strides down the avenue with a slow regularity that marked all his movements.

Lord Clare looked after him anxiously, and muttering to himself, "Well, well, we must manage him some way," entered the Fonde, and spent some hours alone in his room walking to and fro, and tortured with those thousand wild dreams that haunt an imaginative person so like demons when the great epochs of life are close at hand. The sunset paled around him, and night came more darkly than is usual in that climate.

Still he ordered no lights, but placing the bundle of page's garments on the table near his elbow, sat down and waited in sombre silence.

To reveal all the thoughts that flowed through his mind, one must have known his previous life, and of that even to this day I am not informed. Nay, who is ever informed of those acts which give the well-springs of thought in any human being? Men and women live together under the same roof, sit at the same board, and talk of knowing each other's hearts, feelings, lives. At the Day of Judgment when all hearts will be read, fold by fold, like the leaves of a book, how will these persons be astonished at the unspoken feelings, the unimagined acts that have marked the lives, and burned themselves upon the hearts with which they believed themselves so familiar.

Lord Clare sat motionless now, for he was waiting with that intense anxiety which makes one's own breath a torment, because it disturbs the stillness with which we desire to envelop ourselves when listening. At length he heard a step, soft and cat-like, stealing through the passage. Then the door of his room opened, and in the darkness he saw two eyes glowing upon him like those of a tiger, when the rest of its body is concealed among the dusky limbs of a forest tree.

"Come," said the voice of old Papita, "it is time."

Lord Clare started up and moved toward the door.

"The clothes, give me the disguise," whispered the Sibyl; "where is it?"

Without waiting for a reply, she put forth her claw-like hands, felt her way to the table, and grasped the bundle.

"Come, come," she whispered, seizing Lord Clare by the hand.

It seemed to him as if his hand were grasped by the claw of a demon, so hard, dry and hot were those fingers as they clutched his; and as he stooped that she might whisper in his ear, the hot breath that passed over his cheek made him shudder. She led him out back of the Fonde amid broken timbers,

loose rocks and rubbish of every description : she scrambled on, dragging him after her, till they stood by a wooden door opening, as it seemed, into the embankment behind the Fonde.

Papita pushed at this door, and it gave way, revealing the mouth of a subterranean passage choked up with darkness.

"Come quickly, or some one may be on the watch," whispered the Sibyl, for Lord Clare had hesitated at this forbidding entrance.

He was a brave man, but at this instant many stories of gipsy vengeance flashed through his mind, and his companion was not one to reconcile these doubts. There was something too impish and unearthly in her for that.

"Do you fear? the Busne is brave," said the Sibyl scornfully—for even interest could not always keep down her malice—"like a gipsy baby, afraid of the dark!"

"Peace, woman. It is not fear; but I go into this place only when I am certain what it contains, and where it ends," replied the earl, firmly.

"It contains Aurora, and it ends in the palace of the Alhambra," answered the Sibyl, promptly. "It was through this passage that the last Moorish king, Boabdil, left the Alhambra forever. You stand upon the very earth where he came forth to the day which he had learned to curse."

A deeper gloom fell upon Lord Clare. He looked upward. The black, rugged towers of the Alhambra loomed between him and the sky. Clouds hung low upon them, and the dim trees were thick and pall like, blacking the night below him.

The unfortunate Moorish king seemed near by. Never, perhaps, had history pressed so close upon a human heart. Lord Clare for a moment forgot his own position, the Sibyl, Aurora, everything in his intense realization of the past.

"In, in," exclaimed the Sibyl. "I see a man creeping round yon corner of the Fonde; we have no time. If you fear, stay behind: the men of our people know how to avenge themselves in the day time as well as in the dark."

"Have done—have done," exclaimed the earl, sharply, "how

can you judge of my thoughts? I trust you in nothing, but am sure of myself. If you play me false I will shoot you like a dog, woman or no woman; so move on and only speak when you have something to say."

He entered the passage speaking, and the next moment was engulfed with his weird companion in thick darkness.

"Truly, Thomas Turner, my estimable friend, you have got a sad fool for a master, that is a dead certainty!" muttered old Turner, for it was his figure the sharp eye of the Sibyl had discovered—"to trust himself now with this old vagrant—to plunge headforemost into that black pit with the imp of Satan for a guide. It's enough to make one's heart leap into his mouth and freeze there. But of course it's the bounden duty of a good servant to follow his master. Thomas Turner, you are a good servant, everybody admits that. Therefore, Thomas, my friend, follow—follow like a brave fellow as you are!"

With these words, Turner, who was in truth a brave fellow, drew his travelling pistol, settled the lock, and holding it in his right hand, stole cautiously into the passage.

Nothing could have been better calculated to daunt even a brave man than the profound stillness, the palpable blackness of this subterranean passage. Turner had proceeded only a few paces when he felt that like a cavern it had its compartments and its intricate windings—steps to ascend and descend. Then to his dismay he found that it branched off into vaults, and what appeared to be dungeons or secret chambers for concealment. He paused and listened. Nothing was heard, not even the sweet gush of waters that in Granada are ever present like the sunshine or the breeze. All was profound stillness. No footstep, no voice. Deep midnight and those solid stone walls surrounded him alone. He groped about, advancing he knew not whither, tempted every moment to call aloud, though certain that this rash act must defeat his own object.

At last, completely bewildered, he held forth his pistol, and with a finger on the trigger was about to fire, that at least he might have the benefit of a flash to guide his course. But that

moment a faint sound reached his ear. He dropped his hand, listened, and moved on. Yes, it was a light, the faintest possible gleam breaking over the rugged corner of a wall, but it burned steadily enough to guide him onward.

He moved cautiously, for now the faint hum of voices came stealing through the vaulted passage, and he knew that the slightest mistake might expose his presence. Reaching an angle of the wall, he crept into its shadow and held his breath. Before him was a small chamber, or it might be merely an enlargement of the passage. An antique house lamp, rust eaten and moist with mould, hung from the ceiling, evidently trimmed for the first time in years, for the flame was half buried in clouds of smoke ; and drops of the olive oil, with which it had just been filled, rolled down the chased sides, leaving a green path in the rust.

In this strange, murky light a group of persons were standing around a fragment of black marble, in which Turner, with difficulty, traced the outlines of some very ancient sculpture, like that which in his travels he had seen on Egyptian idols. Two other persons besides the Sibyl were present, both in strange garments, and unlike the class of persons he had yet seen in any province of Spain. But Turner scarcely gave them a thought. His attention was too eagerly fixed on Lord Clare, who stood before the platform on which the idol had been lifted, holding a young girl, undoubtedly of gipsy blood, by the hand.

From their attitude they must have just risen from a kneeling posture, and some ceremony seemed just concluded. What the ceremony could be which had brought his master, the withered Sibyl, those strange men, and that wildly beautiful girl around that mutilated form of black marble, Turner could not even imagine. But the whole scene was weird and strange enough for the wildest conjecture. The Sibyl stood forward directly under the lamp. The smoke wreathed in clouds around the fiery red folds of her turban. Her saya was edged knee deep with the richest gold lace, bright in broad flashes, then

tarnished to a green hue, but still of unique splendor; her ear-rings glowed over those mummy-like shoulders like drops of congealed blood. The exulting brightness of her eyes was terrific. She looked so like an evil spirit that poor Turner absolutely believed her to be one, who had cast some infernal charm upon his master.

He shrunk away crowding himself hard against the wall, but still with his eyes fixed on the group. Lord Clare was very pale, and the grim light made this pallor and the excitement in his eyes almost unearthly. A look of painful disgust was on his features, like that of a man who loathes the thing he has forced himself to do. Once he dropped the Gitanilla's hand, looking wearily around as if for something to sit down upon.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE GITANILLA'S OATH.

THEN for the first time Turner saw the eyes of my mother, those wonderful, glorious eyes, fiery as a star, soft as the dew in a flower. They were lifted to Clare's face, fondly, wonderingly, as if she marvelled that he could thus break the delicious joy that thrilled her heart and soul. There was something of lingering terror yet in her face, but so blended with the wild, deep passion of her love, that it kindled up her features like lightning. The old woman was regarding her not with tenderness, that was impossible. If she had any, it lay so deep in that rocky old heart that no ripple of it ever disturbed the hardness of her features.

The Gitanilla drew toward her, took her rigid fingers, and pressed them to her lips and forehead. She uttered a few words in a tongue unknown to Turner, and tears crowded one after another into her great bright eyes. They must have

been full of passionate feeling, for the hard, keen eyes of the Sibyl grew strangely dim, and with her hand she put back the jetty waves from my mother's forehead, making the sign of some strange writing upon its bloodless surface.

They stood together thus, the bright red flounces of their sayas mingling in waves of gold lace and heavy crimson. The blue bodice of the girl pressed to the jet black velvet that clung to the form of the Sibyl like the fragment of some funeral pall. There was something terrible in their appearance. The old woman's arms clung around that lithe form with serpentlike folds. Her turban blended, like waves of fire, with those raven tresses. It seemed like the embrace of a demon. For the lamp whirled and flared overhead, swinging to some concealed current of wind, and the smoke flung around them a dusky veil, now of heavy grey, now threaded with fire by the unsteady flame. Besides this, was the contrast of her rich youth with that terrible thing, a wicked old age.

No wonder Turner shrank against the wall, and grew chilly without knowing why. No wonder Lord Clare was aroused from all the feelings that had enchained him till now! He started forward, and would have taken my mother from the embrace of her last and only relative. But the old woman thrust him aside, and spoke eagerly with the grand-daughter in the Rommany tongue; and in this tongue my mother answered her.

Shall I tell you what she was saying? My mother left me a record in the fragments of her journal. The Sibyl first urged her to win the Busne to the sending of more and more gold; then she extorted a promise, a fearful promise, which the poor girl kept but too faithfully.

When the Sibyl relinquished my mother from her embrace, the poor child staggered and fell away from her arms like a crushed lily. Her lips were violet color; her face more than bloodless. She seemed to be dying.

Lord Clare took her in his arms and laid her face upon his bosom. It was beautiful to see the warm flood of life come back to the mysterious influence of his touch. Her lips grew

bright as strawberries ; and tears rolled from her half-closed eyes, dropping like dew upon the peachy bloom of her cheek. You could see her tremble from head to foot, so deep, so passionate were the feelings that flooded her young being with their delicious joy.

The Sibyl looked on with grim satisfaction, but the two strange men seemed to expostulate with her, or to ask some directions. She answered them haughtily, and touching the ruby ear-rings with her finger, pointed down the passage.

They obeyed at once, each bending his head submissively as he passed the old woman. I do not know how far those ruby ear-rings were symbols of authority, but my great grandame had some mysterious claim of obedience from the descendants of those few of her people who aided her ancestress in the betrayal of Maria de Padilla, and the two men were all of our tribe who could boast of the treacherous blood that had persuaded that heroic woman to her terrible death. They believed that obedience unto death was due the last descendant of the arch-sorceress, who had most effectually worked out their national hate against the whites. To them the ruby ear-rings were a symbol of absolute power. Had my great-grandame commanded them to leap into the Darro without a struggle for life, they would have done it. She only imposed secrecy, craft, and unscrupulous falsehood, and those things came so naturally that it required little authority to enforce them.

These men passed Turner without seeing him. He did not heed them, but still watched the persons who remained standing near the Egyptian idol.

The Sibyl stood directly before Lord Clare, who still half supported her grand-daughter. Now her manner was imposing, her energy sublime; the sorceress blood seemed to glow and burn in her veins as she spoke. It was to Lord Clare she addressed herself, not to the girl. The whispered words that had withered her cheek and lip, were all the farewell admonition she had to give her : but that which she said to Clare had the

same effect. Aurora shook with terror as her relative uttered her last—it might almost be called malediction.

“Go,” she said—“go, and with you take the last drop of my blood that burns in a human heart. Take her—keep faith with her, nor dream that this marriage is less binding than if all the high priests of Spain and of your land, wherever it may be, had celebrated it in the great cathedral down yonder, with the high altar in a blaze of light, and the tomb of Queen Isabella giving sanctity to the spot. Look at your wife, how her eyes dwell upon you—how full of hope and trust they are—how wildly she wishes to be free from this dim vault, alone with you, and away from her last of kin. The blossoms that live half in sunshine, half in snow, on the Sierra Nevada, are not more stainless than this child. The hot sun that ripens the orange on the Guadalquivir is not more fervent than her passionate nature—more burning than her pride. Be just to the child, or beware of the woman. She is in your hands; make of her what you will, a gazelle or a tiger, the thing you call an angel, or the thing you fear as a fiend. That which you make her she will be, a blessing or a curse, which will cling to you for ever and ever. Free to act, free to marry, these were your words twelve hours ago. This you believed, and I, the old gipsy, mocked at your folly.

“In England, you say, and here with us, marriages are alike binding unto death—death, and nothing but death, can separate you from this child. You have sworn it before my god; she has sworn it before her god; and I have sworn by all the eternal powers that exist, high or low. Hope not to shake off Papita's oath, or your own. Your laws—all the laws of this nation or yours are but shadows against the stern will of a woman whom nature has made strong, and treason has left desperate.

“I looked for the stars to-night. They were troubled, buried in clouds, pale and half extinguished in vapor, as the Darro flings them back when it is turbid and muddy. So it always is when I would read her fate and yours. That bespeaks”——

"Stay!" said the earl, sternly, "you are killing her—see how white she is—how she trembles. Why torture her in this way, it can do no good?"

"I declare to you again I feel it in my soul, and read it in the stars, nothing but death shall separate you from this, my grand-daughter. Swear it again!"

She spoke to Aurora, who either from weakness, or obeying the Sibyl's gesture, laid her hand on the forehead of the Egyptian idol, and her white lips moved as if uttering some inward vow. Turner saw this, but Lord Clare mistook the sudden recoil as an evidence of exhaustion, and with a flushed cheek sought to protect her from further persecution.

"This has gone too far," he said; "I will submit no longer. Make what preparations you will, but in haste, for the night is wearing on."

"It is enough," answered the Sibyl. "I have said my say, and the oath is sworn."

"Be in haste," answered the earl impatiently, drawing forth his watch. "It is now past midnight."

The old woman drew aside, and by the smoky light Turner saw that she was searching for something in the folds of her dress.

"Here," she said, coming forth, "this trinket may be worth something to you. Our people would have crushed it up for the gold, but I would not let them."

She held it in her hand, so that the light fell directly upon an exquisite little miniature formed like a shell, which the reader will remember as a portion of the plunder which Chaleco brought from his expedition to Seville. That side of the case was open which held the female portrait, and the light fell with peculiar brightness upon the features.

As Lord Clare saw it he recoiled, drew a sharp breath, and the sudden paleness that crept over his face was terrible.

"This, and in your hands?" he said, in a husky voice, fixing his enlarged eyes on the Sibyl. "How dare you, fiend—how dare you?"

The old woman gave a low hiss with her tongue, and looking hard at Aurora, said, in a clear, sharp tone, "Remember the oath; you will have need; remember this face too."

Lord Clare snatched the miniature from her hand with a violence that made the case shut with a snap, that seemed like the click of a pistol before it goes off. But my mother had seen the face, and though it made little impression at the time, when everything seemed like a dream, she remembered it in after years.

"Now," said the earl, more fiercely than he had spoken before that night, "prepare her at once, I will remain here no longer."

The old woman withdrew, leading my mother with her. They went into some side passage, and Turner lost sight of them, for he was too deeply interested in the movements of Lord Clare to leave his position.

The earl watched till they were out of sight, then sat down with his back against the idol, opened the miniature, gave one glance, shut it again, and bent his forehead upon the hand in which it was clenched. Thus he remained motionless till a sound of footsteps aroused him, when he sprang up, thrust the miniature in his bosom, and stood calm and immovable as a statue, ready to receive his wife. I call her his wife, and never, never while there is breath in my bosom, will I, her child, his child, admit that she was not. Are not our laws as sacred as those of England?

My mother came forward clad in the pretty attire of an English page, and so disguised, so full of that beautiful, shrinking modesty which true women always feel when presented in a doubtful position before a beloved object, that it could not fail to arouse Lord Clare from the stupor that had fallen upon him. He smiled faintly as she came forward, and drawing her arm through his, followed the Sibyl down the subterranean passage, guided by a small lamp that had stood before the Egyptian idol. They came out into the fresh night, on the very spot where the Moorish King gave up the splendor of his

life. Lord Clare thought of this, and his heart grew heavy again.

Turner followed with long, noiseless strides, and gliding behind the Fonde like a shadow, stood by the mules which had been drawn up beneath the thick trees ready to receive the party.

An hour after, my poor mother was looking back to obtain one more last glimpse of Granada, and the gipsy Sibyl sat alone in her cave with a heap of gold in her lap, counting it over and over by the dim light that struggled down from a niche in the smoky wall.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MANSION AND THE COTTAGE.

THE first bright picture upon my memory was of Greenhurst, Lord Clare's ancestral home. It rests in my mind a background of gorgeous and hazy confusion, indistinct and mellow as a sunset cloud. Then comes a misty outline of distant mountains melting into the more clearly defined middle distance, and in the foreground a beautiful stream sleeping beneath old trees, sparkling through the hollows, and spreading out like a lake in the green meadows. A lawn rose softly upward from the banks of this river, broad and green as emerald. If you parted the soft grass, an undergrowth of the finest moss met your view like velvet beneath a wealth of embroidery. Clumps of trees shaded the lawn here and there, and on either hand, so far as the eye could reach, a park of magnificent old chestnuts, with a fine variety of oaks, filled the eye with the vast wealth of their foliage.

A dozen avenues led through this park, some of them miles

in length, and almost all commanded some view of the old mansion. One revealed a gable cutting picturesquely against the sky ; another commanded the back entrance, with its massive stonework, burdened with heavy armorial bearings, and heaped with quarterings till the herald office itself would have been puzzled to unravel them. A third opened upon the east wing, with its broad bay windows curving into old stone balconies covered with ponderous sculpture, its antique casements filled with single sheets of plate glass which shone through the ivy like flashes of a river between the trees that fringe it—thus was blended all that is gay and cheerful in our times with the sombre magnificence of the long ago, beautifully as we find the sunshine pouring its glory into the dark bosom of a forest.

This view I remember best, for it was the first object that ever fastened itself upon my memory. A waste of flower-beds, clumps of rich trees, and the wilderness, as we called a tract of land in which all the wildness of nature was carefully preserved, lay between the little antique cottage that I was born in and Greenhurst.

Lord Clare had his own rooms in that wing of the building, and a footpath bordered with wild blossoms, rich ferns, and creeping ivy, wound from a flight of stone steps that descended from his apartments, around the circular flower-beds, and through the wilderness to the jessamine porch of our dwelling. It was a well-trodden path when I first remember it ; and no foot ever passed down its entire length but that of Lord Clare. Even the gardeners felt that to be in that portion of the grounds, after the master left his apartments, was an intrusion. Turner, dear, good old Turner, visited us every day, but he always came down the chestnut avenue. No other servant from the mansion ever came near us:

A Spanish woman who had learned but little English, was all the domestic we had. Lord Clare had brought her from Malaga, and had she spoken his language well, the most prying curiosity could have gained no information regarding my parents from her.

Our cottage was the loveliest little dwelling on earth. White roses, rich golden multifloras, and the most fragrant of honeysuckles covered it to the roof. You were forced to put back a sheet of blossoms with each hand like drapery every time you opened a casement. The stone porch was sheeted over and fringed down with white jessamine: and the garden that surrounded it was a perfect labyrinth of blossoms. Crimson fuchias, purple and white petunias, verbenas of every tint, roses of every clime, heliotrope and carnations made the earth gorgeous, and the air soft with fragrance.

The peaked roof shot up among the branches of a noble elm tree, and when there was a high wind I loved to watch the old rook's nest sway to and fro above the chimney tops, while the birds wheeled and cowered among the branches like widowers at a funeral.

The interior of the house was like a cabinet. Pictures collected from abroad, each a gem that might have been piled an inch deep with gold and its value not yet obtained, hung upon the walls. Antique cabinets of tortoise-shell and gold, lighted up with precious stones, stood in the principal room; soft, easy chairs glowing with crimson velvet; tables of Sèvres china, in which beds of flowers and masses of fruit glowed, as if just heaped together by some child that had overburdened its little arms in the garden; others of that fine mosaic only to be found in Italy; carpets from Persia, from Turkey, and one Gobelin, rendered that cottage one nest of elegance. Everything was in proportion, and selected with the most discriminating taste. Small as the building was compared to Greenhurst, it did not seem crowded, yet there was garnered up everything that Lord Clare held most precious.

It was well for us, for he could not have lived away from the beautiful. His taste, his sensuous enjoyment of material things might gain new zest by brief contrasts of the hard and the coarse, but he would not have endured them altogether. Thus it was often said that no man sustained himself under privation or the toil of travel better than he did. He not only endured

but enjoyed it. The effort sharpened his appetite for the luxurious and the beautiful. In his whole life, heart and soul, he was an epicure.

Perhaps he had some motive beyond his own convenience in thus surrounding my mother with objects a queen might have envied. He might have wished to overwhelm her remembrance of the miserable gipsy cave in the ravine at Granada by this superb contrast, or possibly it was only a caprice, a natural desire to surround her and himself with things that enrich the intellect and charm the sense. My mother thought it a proof of affection, but she was a child. We often heap material benefits on the being who has a right to our devotion as an atonement for the deeper feeling which the heart cannot render. The man who truly loves requires no stimulant from without. He is always surrounded by the beautiful.

Another might have feared that this sudden change of condition would have set awkwardly on a creature so untutored as my mother—for remember she was a mere child, not more than sixteen when I was born—but genius adapts itself to everything; and if ever a woman of genius lived, that woman was the gipsy wife of Lord Clare. His wife, I say—his wife!—his wife! I will repeat it while I have breath; she was his wife. What had the laws of England to do with a contract made in Spain? What—but I will not go on. My blood burns—the wild Rommany blood of my mother—it has turned his blood into fire that smoulders, but will not consume. There are times when I hate myself for the English half of life that he gave me. Yet I cannot think of him, so kind, so gentle, so full of intellectual refinement, without a glow of admiration. It is his people—his nation—his laws that I hate, not him—not his memory. Indeed, at times, I feel the tears crowd into my eyes when I think of him. My hate is a bitter abstraction after all. When I reflect, it glides from him like rain from the plumage of an eagle.

You should have seen my mother in that beautiful home back of the wilderness at Greenhurst. The moist climate of

England refreshed her beauty like dew ; her lithe figure had become rounded into that graceful fullness which we find in the antique statues of Greece, still the elasticity, the wild freedom remained. She was more gentle, more quiet, almost sleepily tranquil, because the fullness of her content arose from perfect love and perfect trust. She had left nothing in Spain to regret ; and every hope that she held in existence was centred at Greenhurst. Never did there exist a creature so isolated. She had no being, no thought, save in her husband. In the wide, wide world he was her only friend, her sole acquaintance even.

I do not think that she left the park once during her whole stay in England. The noble little Arabian that she rode knew every avenue and footpath in the enclosure, but never went beyond it. She did not seem to feel that there was a world outside the shadow of those old trees. She felt not the thralls of society, nor cared for its mandates more than she had done in the barranco at Granada ; but a delicious and broad sense of freedom—an outgushing of her better nature made this, her new existence, perfect heaven compared to that.

With time her intellect had started into vigorous life. A teacher so beloved, with perceptions quick as lightning, had kindled up the rich ore of her nature, and you could see the flash of awakened genius in every change of her countenance. Still the world remained a dream to her ; she never thought of human beings except as they were presented to her in books—and Lord Clare selected every volume that she read. He was not likely to present knowledge of conventional life to a person situated as she was, with a mind so acute and imaginative. No, it was the lore of past ages that she studied. Those noble old authors of Greece and Rome whom Clare understood so well, became familiar to her as his own voice. Without having the least idea of it, she was deeply imbued not only with classical knowledge, but with the lofty feelings that inspired those ancient authors, who seldom find themselves echoed with full tone in the mind of woman.

Think what a character hers must have been, with all this grand poetry grafted into the wild gipsy nature.

Still my mother was not perfectly happy ; a vague want haunted even her tranquil and luxurious existence. It was a feeling, not a thought, the shadowy longing of a heart loving to the centre, which finds half the soul that should have answered it clothed in mystery. She could not account for this hungry feeling. It was not suspicion—it was not a doubt, but something deeper and intangible. The love which fills a bosom like hers always flings its own shadow, for love is the sunshine of genius, and shadows ever follow the pathway of the sun.

Still, her life was very happy, not the less so, perhaps, for these wandering heart-mists. My birth had its effect also, for it seems to me that no woman thoroughly sounds the depths of her soul till she becomes a mother. I have read her journal at this period, and every sentence is a rich, wild gush of poetry ; you can almost feel a torrent of blissful sighs warming the paper on which she wrote, such as a mother feels when the first-born sleeps upon her bosom for the first time.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONCEALMENTS AND SUSPICIONS.

AND now I have an existence, I am a human soul growing like a flower in the warmth of that young bosom, flitting through the house and haunting my mother's lap like a bird. The first memory that I have is like a starbeam, as quick and vivid. My mother sat in a little room somewhere in an angle of the building just at sunset. Her hair was down ; the Spanish woman had unbraided the long tresses, and shaken

them apart in dark wavy masses. They fell over the crimson cushions of her chair to the ground. The sash doors were open into a stone balcony choked up with clematis. The sunset came through in golden flashes, kindling up those black waves till they shone with a purple bloom. Her dress was crimson, of camel's hair, I think, with a violet tinge, and flowing down her person in soft folds, that glowed in the light like pomegranates on the bough. Half over her shoulders and half upon the chair, was a cashmere shawl of that superb palm-leaf pattern which looks so quiet, but is so richly gorgeous; a profusion of black lace fell around her arms and neck, contrasting the golden brown of her complexion. Her eyes—I never saw such eyes in my life—so large, so radiant, yet so soft; the lashes were black as jet, and curled upward.

It is useless. I can remember, but not describe her, that peach-like bloom, those soft lips so full, so richly red. I have no idea where I was at the time, only that I saw her sitting in that room so much like a picture, and felt that she was my mother.

She was looking into the garden with an expression of tranquil expectation on her face. I remember watching the shadows from her eyelashes as they lay so dreamily on her cheeks, for though she evidently expected some one, it was not with doubt; she was quiet as the sunbeams that fell around her, now and then turning her head a little as the Spanish woman gathered up a fresh handful of her hair, but still with her half-shut eyes fixed upon the footpath that led through the wilderness.

I sat down upon some cushions that had been left in the balcony, and watched her through the open sash till the heavy folds of hair were braided like a coronet over her head, and her look became a little anxious. Then I too began to gaze across the intervening flower beds upon the footpath, as if a share in the watchfulness belonged to me.

At last, as the golden sunset was turning to violet, and one felt the unseen dew as it fell, I saw, through the purple mist, a

man walking slowly along the footpath. My heart leaped, I uttered a little shout, and clasping my hands, looked up to my mother. Her lips were parted, and her eyes flashed like diamonds.

"It is the Busne—the Busne," I said.

She took me in her arms, and smothering me with glad kisses, murmured, "My Busne, mine, mine!"

I answered back. "No, no, mine," holding my hand to her mouth, and still shouting "mine!"

Her beautiful face grew cloudy. My words made her restive: she would not have her entire right questioned even in sport by her own child. She placed me upon the cushions, and turning away entered the room again.

My father came across the flower garden with a quicker pace. He held a light basket in his hand which I saw with a shout, making a desperate effort to clamber over the old stone balustrade, which was at least ten feet from the ground. He held up his hand reprovingly, called for me to go back, and turning a corner of the house, was in the room with my mother before I could disentangle my hands and clothes from the multiflora and clematis vines into which I had plunged.

This too was the first time that the person of my father fixed itself definitely on my remembrance. He stood leaning over my mother's chair, holding her head back with a soft pressure of the hand upon her forehead, and gazing down into her upturned eyes with a smile that might have been playful, but for a certain undercurrent of sadness that could not escape the sharp perception of a child like me. Yet even this added to the singular beauty of his face, a strange type of beauty that combined the most delicate physical organization with a high order of mental strength. His forehead, square and high, without being absolutely massive, was white as an infant's, and in moments of rest as smooth. But a painful thought or a disturbing event would ripple over its delicate surface like the wind over a snow-drift. The brows grew heavy; two faint lines marked themselves lengthwise upon the forehead just

between the eyes ; a peculiarity that I have never seen save in persons of high talent. The contrast between him and my mother was almost startling, he, so fair, so refined, so slender, with a reservation as if he concealed half ; she, dark, vivid, resplendent, with every impulse sparkling in her eye before it reached the lip ; wild as a bird—uncalculating as a child, but with passion and energy that matched his. When two such spirits move on harmoniously it is heaven, for the great elements of character are alike in each ; but when they clash, alas ! when they clash !

I cannot tell what feelings actuated my parents, or if anything had happened to disturb them, but they grew sad, gazing into each other's eyes, till with a faint smile he dropped his hand from her head, saying, "am I late, Aurora !"

She answered him, and rising with a bright smile, drew the shawl around her. He sat down in her chair, and she sunk noiselessly as a woman of the Orient down to the cushions.

I was completely overlooked, but if they were forgetful, I was not. The little basket stood upon the floor, where my father had placed it. I crept that way softly, took up a layer of fragrant blossoms, and there, interspersed with vine leaves, I discovered some of the most delicious hothouse grapes, purple and amber-hued, with peaches that seemed to have been bathed in the sunset.

In my delight, I uttered an exclamation. My father looked round.

"Come hither, mischief," he said, threatening me with his finger ! "Come hither with the fruit. It is for your mother."

She half started from her cushion, and held out both hands, as I came tottering across the carpet, with the basket in my arms. It was for her, and he brought it. That was enough to render anything precious ; besides the fruit was very fine, and the hothouses at Greenhurst had produced none that season. Her eyes sparkled as she received the basket in her lap.

"There," she said, filling my greedy hands with a peach and a bunch of grapes ; "go away, little ungrateful, to for-

get papa's kiss in searching after plunder—sit down and be quiet."

I sat down, and while devouring my fruit, watched and listened as children will.

"How beautifully they are arranged!" said my mother, placing and replacing the peaches with her hand, for she had the eye and taste of an artist; "how rich, all the exquisite delicacy of spring blossoms with a fruity ripeness! One can almost taste the fragrance in a peach; at least, I fancy so."

"Your fancy would almost create a reality!" said my father, smiling.

"How beautiful, how kind in you to devote so much time and so much taste all for us!" continued my mother, lifting her radiant eyes to his; "for I know who did all this, not the old gardener, nor dear good Turner, they could never have blended these leaves."

"Nay, nay," answered Lord Clare, over whose lips a mischievous smile had been playing, "do not fling away so much thankfulness; neither the gardener, Turner, or myself had anything to do with it. The fruit came from some kind neighbor, I fancy, who wishes to break my gardener's heart, for not a peach or grape has ripened as yet under his supervision. I found the basket on a table in my room, and as it was prettily arranged, and looked deliciously ripe, I saved it for you and the child."

A shade came over the superb eyes of my mother, but she smiled and murmured, "Very well, you brought them, that is real at least."

"Yes, yes, I brought them sure enough," he answered, laughing, as he watched me crowding one grape after another into my mouth, while I devoured the rest with my eyes. "See, it is one of Murillo's children eating grapes. You remember the picture in Munich?"

"Yes, oh, it is very like! What eyes the creature has! How greedily she eats, she is the picture itself!" and my mother

laughed also, the last thoroughly gleeful laugh that I ever heard from her lips.

I did not trouble myself about the Murillo, but the fruit was delicious, that was quite enough for me, so I shook my head and would have laughed too had that been possible with so many grapes in my mouth.

"Ah, what is this?" exclaimed my mother, holding up a rose-colored note which she had found among the cape jessamines that lay in a wreath between the basket and the fruit.

"This will explain who has sent the gift, I fancy," answered my father, taking the note; "I searched for something of the kind at first, but could find nothing."

He unfolded the paper carelessly as he spoke. She was looking up, and I had stopped eating, curious to know all about it. I shall never forget the change that came over my father as the writing struck his eye. His face, even to the lips, whitened. He felt her gaze upon him, and crushed the note in his hand, while flashes of red came and went across his forehead.

She turned pale as death, and without asking a question stood up, swaying as if a current of air swept over her. Some magnetic influence must have linked us three together. Surely the pulses in my father's heart reached some string in ours by those subtle affinities that no wisdom has yet explained. I felt a chill creeping over me; the fruit lay neglected in my lap, I cast it aside upon the carpet, and creeping to my mother, clung to her hand, hiding myself in the folds of her robe.

My father still held the note, gazing upon it in silence, buried in thought. His face had regained its pallid composure; he seemed to have forgotten our presence. At length he looked up, but not at us, and with a forced smile broke the seal. He glanced at the contents, then held it toward my mother with the same constrained air and smile; but his hand shook, and even I could see that something very painful had come over him.

"From Marston Court."

This, with a date, was all the note contained. She read it over and over again. It explained nothing. It was but a single sentence, the name of a place of which she had never heard, but she looked in his face and remained pale as before. The intuition of a heart like hers is stronger than reason.

A constraint fell upon us. I crept away among my cushions, and felt the twilight darken around us. Then I sunk into a heavy-hearted sleep, for my parents were both silent, and I was soon forgotten.

When I awoke the windows were still open, and the room seemed empty. The moonbeams lay white and full upon the clematis vines, and their blossoms stirred beneath them like masses of snow. Children always turn to the light. Darkness seems unnatural to them. I crept out into the balcony, and clambering up the old balustrade, looked out on the garden. Close by the wilderness where the shadows lay deepest, I saw a man walking to and fro like a ghost. Once he came out into the moonlight, and I knew that it was my father.

A narrow flight of steps, choked up with creeping vines, ran down from the balcony. I scrambled over them on my hands and knees, tearing my way through the clematis like a wild animal, and leaving great fragments of my dress behind. I ran through the flower beds, trampling down their sweet growth, and pausing on the verge of the shadow—for I was afraid of the dark—called out.

My father came up hurriedly with an exclamation of surprise, and evidently alarmed. His hat was off—his beautiful brown hair, damp and heavy with night dew—but his hands were hot as he lifted me up, and when I clung to his neck and laid my cheek to his, it was like fire. Moonlight gives almost supernatural brilliancy to the human eye. His glittered like stars.

"My child, my poor child," he said, "what is the matter? How came you abroad? Your little feet are wet with dew, wet, clothes and all; what has come over us, my pet, my darling?"

He took out his watch and looked at it in the moonlight. It was twelve o'clock. Holding me close to his bosom, he strode across the garden and up the steps, crushing the vines beneath his feet. There was no light in the chamber, but upon the cushion which she had occupied at his feet sat my mother. The moon had mounted higher, and its light fell like a great silver flag through the casement. She sat in the centre motionless and drooping like a Magdalene, with light streaming over her from the background, as we sometimes, but rarely, see in a picture.

At the noise of my father's footstep, she started up, and came forth with a wild, wondering look.

"How is this, Aurora?" he said, in a voice of mild reproof, "I left you with the child hours ago, and now when I thought you both at rest, she is wandering away in the night, wet through and shivering with cold."

"I did not know it. When you went out a strange numbness fell upon me. It seemed as if I were in the caves at Granada again, and that all our people were preparing to take me to the Valley of Stones, I was so passive, so still!"

"Aurora!" said my father, in a tone of bitter reproof, "you know how I loathe that subject—never mention it again—never think of it!"

"I never have thought of it till to-night," she answered, abstractedly, "why should I?"

"And why to-night?"

"I do not know. My life has two sides, one all blackness," here she shuddered—"the other all light; the barranca at Granada, and this house, my grandmother and you."

Her face became radiant with affection, as she lifted it to his in the moonlight.

"Why should she come between us even in my thought? You are here, you, my child, my home. What has cast this heavy burden on my soul? It is the gipsy blood beginning to burn again: surely nothing has happened."

She questioned him closely with her eyes, thus pleading with

him to silence the vague doubts that haunted her ; he answered faintly,

“ Nothing, child, nothing has happened.”

She drew a deep breath, and gave forth a faint laugh.

“ Ah, how strangely I have felt. It must have been the cold night air. This England is so chilly, and you, how damp your clothes seem. Your hair is saturated ! Come in, beloved, come in, my poor child, my bird of Paradise, she will perish !”

Lord Clare bore me into the chamber. Lights were obtained, and my wet garments were exchanged for a night robe of delicate linen.

“ See if I do not take care of her,” said my mother, folding the cashmere shawl around me, while great tears crowded to her eyes, and she looked timidly into his face.

“ I do not doubt it,” he answered, kindly, “ she is warm now and getting drowsy upon your bosom. Go to rest ; both need it. - Do you know it is after midnight ?”

He touched her forehead with his lips, and kissing me, prepared to go. She looked after him, and her great eyes said a thousand times more than she would have dared to speak.

He hesitated, said something about the necessity of being early at Greenhurst, and then, as if restraint had become irksome beyond endurance, laid his hand on the stone balustrade, and leaped over.

My mother drew me closer and closer to her bosom, as his footsteps died on the still air. I remember no more, only that in the morning I awoke in her arms with the shawl folded around me. She had not been in bed all night.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE OLD ESCRITOIR.

AFTER this night I never remember to have seen that rich, fruity smile upon my mother's lips again. Bear in mind, there had been no quarrel between her and Lord Clare ; not even a hard word ; but she loved him so deeply, so fatally. She who had no world, no thought, no existence that did not partake of him, and her trust in him had been like the faith of a devotee. All at once she *felt* that he had secrets, thoughts, memories, many things long buried in his heart, of which she had no knowledge. She had gathered it only from a look ; but if all the angels of heaven had written it out in fire before her eyes, the revelation could not have been more perfect.

And now the proud tranquillity of her life, the rich contentment of her love departed forever. The gipsy blood fired up again ; she was restless as a wild bird. Her care of me relaxed. I ran about the park recklessly, like the deer that inhabited it. She rode out sometimes alone, and always at full speed. I saw her often talking with old Turner, and observed that he looked anxious and distressed after their conversations.

She was a proud creature, that young gipsy mother, but it was a pride of the soul, that which blends with genius as platinina strengthens and beautifies gold. All the sweet trusting fondness of manner which had made her love so luxurious and dreamy, changed to gentle sadness. She met Lord Clare meekly and with a certain degree of grateful submission, but without warmth. It was the humility which springs from excess of pride. In the whole range of human feelings there is not a sensation that approaches so near to meekness, as the pride of a woman who feels a wrong but gives it no utterance.

Lord Clare saw and understood this. You could see it in his air ; in his slow step as he approached the house ; in the anxious look with which he always regarded my mother on their first meetings. He grew more tender, more solicitous to divine her wishes, but never asked an explanation of the change that had come over her. What was the reason of this ? Why did Lord Clare remain silent on a subject that filled both their thoughts ? Those who know the human heart well can best answer.

Lord Clare had reached that point in life when we shrink from new sources of excitement. I have said that he was young only in years. The romance of suffering had long since passed away. He was capable of feeling the pain, nothing more.

Close by Lord Clare's estate, and visible through the trees in winter, when no foliage intervened, was an old mansion that had once been castellated, but modern art had transformed it into a noble dwelling, leaving the old keep and some prominent towers merely for their picturesque effect. A large estate surrounded it, sweeping down, on the north, to that of Lord Clare's, and extending as far as the eye could reach toward the mountain ridges that terminated the view.

The estate had belonged to a wealthy banker of London, one of those city men who sometimes, by their energies, sweep the possessions of the peerage into their coffers with a sort of ruthless magic. This man had married a distant relative of Lord Clare—a lady who at one time had been an inmate of his father's family. She had married the banker suddenly, most people supposed for his wealth, for she carried nothing but high birth and connections to her city bridegroom.

The dwelling, of which I speak, had been purchased before the marriage, as a surprise for the lady. Close to the estate of her young relative, almost regal in its splendor, what gift could be more acceptable to the bride ? It was purchased, renovated, furnished, and settled upon her. On her bridal morning only she became aware of the fact. Those who wit-

nessed the ceremony saw that the bride turned pale, and that a strange look came into her face as she acknowledged the magnificent kindness of her bridegroom; but one brief visit was all that she made to the estate, and it became a matter of comment that Lord Clare should have started on his foreign travels the day before the bridal party arrived in the neighborhood.

Now Mr. Morton was dead, and about this time his widow, Lady Jane, came down to live at the castle. Turner informed us of this, but there was something in his manner that did not please me. His precise language, and that sort of solemn drollery that made him so unique, and to us so lovable, abandoned him as he told this news. His dear, honest, eyes wavered, and there was something wrong in his whole appearance that I shall never forget.

Another piece of news he brought us after this. Lord Clare's sister, a lady some years older than himself, had arrived at Greenhurst, and more company was expected. This lady was a widow, and heiress at law to the title and entailed estates, for both descended alike to male or female heir. My poor mother knew nothing of all this; how should she? The laws, and even customs of England were a sealed book to her. She only felt that strangers were intruding into her paradise, and the shadows around her home grew deeper and deeper.

I fancy all this gossip was brought to us by Lord Clare's direction, for he never mentioned the subject himself, and poor old Turner certainly did not seem to find much pleasure in imparting unpleasant information. With all his eccentricities, he was a discreet and feeling man.

I have said that I ran wild about the grounds, like a little with or fairy. This made me bold and reckless. I put no limits to my rambles, but trampled through flower-beds, waded rivulets, and made myself acquainted with everything I met without fear. Up to this time I had never entered the mansion nor met any of the servants without avoiding them. Perhaps I had been directed to do this. I cannot remember if

it was the command of my mother or an intuition. But now I ventured into the garden, the graperies, and at length into the house itself.

I had not seen Lord Clare in several days, and possibly it was a longing for his presence that gave me courage to steal up the broad, oaken staircase, and along the sumptuous rooms that lay beyond.

The magnificence did not astonish me, for it was only on a broader scale than the exquisite arrangement of my own pretty home; but the stillness, the vast breadth and depth of the apartments filled me with a sort of awe, and I crept on, half afraid, half curious, to see what would come next.

At length I found myself in a little cabinet. The walls were hung with small pictures; the carpet was like wood-moss gleaming through flowers; two or three crimson easy-chairs stood around. On a table lay some curious books in bindings of discolored vellum, others glowing with purple and gold, the ancient and modern in strong contrast. An escritoir of ebony, sculptured an inch deep, and set with precious stones, stood near it; some papers lay upon the open leaf, and a small drawer was half out, in which were other papers, folded and emitting a faint perfume.

Child-like, I clambered up the chair that stood before this desk and began tossing the papers about. Something flashed up from the drawer like a ray of light. I plunged my hand in again and drew forth a golden shell, frosted over with ridges of orient pearls and edged with diamonds. I clasped the gem between my hands and sprang down with a glad little shout, resolved to examine it at my leisure. Either the leap or the pressure of my hands opened the spring, and when I sat down on the carpet and unclosed my fingers, the shell flew open, and I saw the face of Lord Clare. I had not seen my father in some days, and as if the portrait had been himself, I fell to kissing it, murmuring over the endearing names that his presence always prompted.

After a little, my eyes fell on the opposite half of the shell,

and the face that met my gaze checked my joy ; it was not beautiful, but a singular fascination hung about the broad forehead and the clear, greyish blue eyes. The power embodied there enthralled me more than beauty could have done. My murmurs ceased ; my heart stopped its gleeful beating ; I looked on the pair with a sort of terror, yet could not remove my eyes.

All at once I heard steps in the next room. Huddling the miniature up with the folds of my scarlet dress, I sat upon the floor, breathless and full of wild curiosity, but not afraid. The door opened and Lord Clare came in. He did not observe me, for a cloud of lace from one of the windows fell between us, and he sat down by the desk wearily leaning his forehead in the palm of one hand. I heard him sigh and observed that he moved his hand rapidly across his forehead two or three times, as if to assuage the pain of some harassing thought.

Still with the miniature and some folds of my dress huddled together, I got up, and moving toward the desk clambered softly up the chair on which he sat. Putting one arm around his neck, I laid my head close to his cheek and murmured, after the fashion of my gipsy mother, " Oh, my Busne, my Busne !"

He started violently ; my weight drew back the chair, and I fell heavily to the carpet.

" Child, child, how came you here ?" cried my father, looking down upon me, pale as death, and excited beyond anything I had ever witnessed, " surely, surely, your mother cannot have brought you—tell me, was it Turner—was it"—

" No, no," I answered, forcing back the tears of pain that sprung to my eyes, " it was myself, not Turner, not mamma, only myself—my own self ; I came alone ; I will go alone—I and the pretty Busne in my dress. That will not throw me down—that will not strike my head, and fill my eyes with sparks of fire. It is the good Busne, mamma and I loved—it will make her glad again. Let me go out—me and the good Busne."

I still lay upon the floor, for the blow against my head made it reel when I attempted to move ; but my hand clung to the miniature, and a fierce spirit of rage, hitherto unknown, possessed me. He stooped over me with his old, gentle manner, and attempted to lift me in his arms, but in my rage I shrunk away.

"You don't love me—you don't love mamma," I cried, fighting him back with one hand. "She knows it—I know it, and so does good Turner. You go away one, two, four days, and all that time she sits this way, looking on the floor."

I struggled to a sitting posture and sunk into the abstracted manner that had become habitual to my mother. I do not know what chord of feelings was struck by this position, but tears crowded into his eyes, and dropping on one knee by my side, he laid a hand on my head. I sprang up so violently that the miniature fell to my feet, glittering and open.

"Child, gipsy, where did you get this?" he cried, white with agitation, and seizing my arm. "There !" I answered, stamping my foot, and pointing with my clenched hand to the desk.

"Who told you—how dare you?"

"No one told me—dare, what is that?" I answered, meeting his pale anger with fire in my heart and eyes.

"Contaminated again by this gipsy gang," he muttered, gazing upon the female face. "Jane, Jane, to what degradation you have driven me."

I listened greedily. The name of that woman was Jane ; how from that hour I hated the sound.

"Go !" he said to me, sternly, "go and never enter this room again. Tell your mother that this mad life must have an end. You shall not run through the estate like a gip—like a wild animal."

Every word sunk like a drop of gall into my heart—the bitterness—the scorn—the angry mention of my mother's name. I left the miniature in his hand, and, with my infant teeth scarcely larger than pearls clenched hard, turned away, burning with futile wrath. He called me back, but I kept on.

Again he called, and his voice trembled. It only filled my little heart with scorn that a man should not hold his anger more firmly. In order to avoid him, I fled like a deer through the spacious apartments, ignorant what direction I ought to take, but determined to run anywhere rather than speak to him again.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE LADY OF MARSTON COURT.

I SPRANG forward like a hunted animal, through ante-rooms, chambers, halls, and galleries. At last I stood panting and wild as an uncaged bird, in what seemed a little summer parlor, opening upon the most blooming nook of a flower garden. Broad sash windows led to the ground, flooding the room with cheerful light. If I remember correctly, for nothing but a dizzy sense of luxurious elegance reached me at the time, the apartment was filled with rich, old-fashioned furniture, which required the graceful relief of embroidered cushions, and a lavish supply of flowers to make it so cheerful as it seemed.

All the doors in that house opened without noise, and, though I rushed in madly enough, the carpets were too thick for any sound of my tumultuous approach to precede me. A lady sat in one of the low windows reading. I started and held my breath—not from fear, that from infancy had been a sentiment unknown to me—but a terrible sensation, which even now I can neither explain nor describe, seized upon me. The face of that woman was the one I had seen in the miniature. The same grandeur of forehead, the same eyes—not beautiful in repose, but full of all the latent elements of beauty. The same blended strength and sweetness in the mouth and chin was there.

She was in deep mourning. A crape bonnet and veil lay on the sofa by her side, and her golden hair contrasted with the sweeping sable of her bombazine dress. She was neither handsome nor young, yet the strange mesmeric influence that surrounded that woman had a thousand times more power over those who could feel it, than youth or the most perfect loveliness of form and features could have secured. Her influence over me was a sort of enchantment. I held my breath, and remember feeling a deep sentiment of pity for my mother. I had no reason for this, and was a mere child in all things, but the moment my eyes fell on that woman they filled with tears of compassion for my mother.

She was reading and did not know of my presence ; but after a moment Lord Clare came hastily forward in pursuit of me, and though his footsteps gave forth no sound, and his movements were less rapid than mine, I could see that she *felt* his approach ; for her pale cheek grew scarlet, and I saw the book tremble like a leaf in her hand. He passed me, for I stood close to the wall, and entered the room before she looked up. Then their eyes met, and hers, oh, how warmly they sparkled beneath the drooping lids after that first glance !

Lord Clare checked his footsteps, stood a moment irresolute, then advanced toward her. She rose, and I saw that both trembled, and their voices were so broken that some murmured words passed between them which escaped me. The first sentence that I understood was from the lady.

"I thought that your sister had arrived, and drove over, notwithstanding your uncouslnly neglect of my note."

"She is expected every moment," answered Lord Clare, in a gentle but firm voice, for his self-possession had returned.

He sat down as if forced to do the honors of his house, and made some cold inquiries after the lady's health, but without looking at her. The lady was greatly agitated, I could see that plainly enough. Her color came and went, and if she attempted to speak, her lips trembled and uttered no sound. Her eyes were fixed upon Lord Clare, and, in my whole life, I

have never seen anything so full of the soul's grandeur as those eyes while they slowly filled with tears. They had not uttered a word for some moments, then with a quiver not only of the lips, but of all her features, she uttered his name.

"Clarence."

He looked up shivering like a leaf to the sound, and well he might, for never did a proud woman's soul go more eloquently forth in a single word.

"What would you with me, Lady Jane Morton?" he said, with that measured firmness which often precedes the breaking down of a man's stern will.

"I would say," answered Lady Jane, and the tears rolled one by one down her burning cheeks as she spoke, "I would say that my pride, my stubbornness has wronged you."

"It has indeed," was the still cold reply.

"I would—I would speak of my regret."

"What can regret avail? Lady, tell me if you have the power—what can atone for years of wasted youth—affections trampled to the dust, a life disturbed?"

"Ah, Clarence."

How strangely the name sounded. I had never heard it in my life before, and I am sure my poor mother was ignorant that he was called Clarence. This among the rest he had hoarded from her.

"Oh, Clarence, I feel—I have long felt how cruel, how ungrateful, how miserably proud I was—but I, I, do you think I have not suffered?"

Lord Clare looked at her suddenly. An expression of painful surprise came over his pale features.

"Why should you have suffered?" he questioned, almost sternly, "because you pitied the man you had scorned?"

"Because I loved him!" The words seemed wrung from the very depths of her heart. Her face fell forward, and she buried its shame in her hands.

Lord Clare sprang to his feet. A glow of such joy as I have never seen on a human face before or since, transfigured

him. His eyes absolutely blazed ; and a smile, oh, the glory of that smile poured its sunshine over his features. It lasted but a moment, the next that beautiful joy went out. Some sharp memory convulsed his features, and he dropped back in his seat again. His eyes had fallen upon me.

She looked up and only saw the last miserable expression of his face. A faint groan burst from her lips, and you could see her noble form shrink with a sense of humiliation.

"I know—I know," she cried, clasping her hands, and making a strong effort to subdue the anguish of disappointment that seized upon her—"my cruelty has done its work—even the poor privileges of friendship cannot be ours."

"It is too late—too late," said Lord Clare, turning his eyes almost fiercely upon my little form where it crouched by the wall.

"Still," said Lady Jane, with more firmness, "I must not be condemned as heartless and unprincipled where my motives were all good, and my judgment only in fault. That which was self-sacrifice must not rest in your heart as perfidy. I was proud, unreasonable, but as I live all this was from a solemn conviction of right. I believed that the love you expressed for me"—

"Expressed !" said Lord Clare, in a tone of bitter reproach.

"*Felt* for me then—for I am satisfied that you did love me once."

Here Lady Jane's assumed strength gave way. When we speak of love as a thing that has been, what woman's heart is there which does not swell with regret ?

"I did love you," said Lord Clare, turning his eyes away from the sight of her tears.

"And do so no longer?" was the earnest, almost supplicating reply. How full of soul that woman was—what strange fascination lay about her !

"It is too late—I cannot." He met the expression of her eyes, those pleading, wonderful eyes, and added, "I dare not !"

She understood him. She felt that her empire in that heart was there still, though it might be in ruins. Still she struggled hard to suppress the exhibition of this wild delight, but it broke through her tears like lightning among rain-drops. It dimpled her mouth—oh, she *was* beautiful then! She strove to conceal this heart-tumult, and kept her eyes upon the floor, but the lids glowed like rose-leaves, and flashes as if from great diamonds came through her dark lashes. Yes—yes, she was beautiful then! One moment of expression like that is worth a life-time of the symmetrical prettiness which ordinary men admire in common-place women. With the conviction of his continued affection Lady Jane recovered much of her composure. Her manner, unconsciously perhaps to herself, became gentle, pleading, almost tender. If she wept, smiles brightened through her tears. Now and then her voice was almost playful, and once as she lifted her eyes to his, there was a faint reflection of her mood upon Lord Clare's face. Alas! my poor mother!

"We may never mention this subject again," she said, with sweet meekness, "and now let me say one word in my own exculpation. We were inmates of the same family—you full of youth in its first bright vigor—I your elder by some years. It was a safe companionship—our families never dreamed of danger. I full of worldly wisdom, strong in the untaxed strength of a heart that had never truly loved, but fancied itself tried to the utmost, would have smiled in scorn had any one predicted that which followed. You loved me notwithstanding my years, my want of beauty, my poverty, you loved me—and I loved you—God only knows how completely, how fatally!"

"Go on," said Lord Clare, who listened breathlessly.

"You," continued Lady Jane, "brave, noble, generous, had no dread, no false shame. You would have made me lady of this mansion, the partaker of your bright young life. You gloried in the passion that won forgetfulness of all disparity between us, believing that it would secure happiness to us

both. You offered me a hand which the proudest lady of England would have gloried in accepting. Listen to me, Clarence, I would at that moment have given up all my after existence, could I have been your wife one year, certain that the love you expressed would have endured—that you would never regret the sacrifice so readily made for me. Still, I refused you—nay, turned from professions of affection that were the sweetest, dearest sounds that ever filled my ear. You were young—I no longer so. You were rich—I a poor dependent on your father's bounty. I was a coward, I had no courage to brave the whispers which would say that, treacherous to the hospitality of my relative, mercenary, grasping, I had used my experience to entrap the young heir of a rich earldom into an unsuitable marriage. I could not endure that the disparity of our years and my poverty should become subjects of common gossip."

"How little I cared for that!" said Lord Clare, with a constrained smile.

"I know it—but this very generosity, this self-abnegation frightened me, I could not believe in its permanency. It seemed to me more the thanklessness of youth than a stern, settled purpose. You had forbearance for my maturity, but I, ungrateful that I was, had no faith in your youth."

"Did you deem love a thing of years?"

"Not now, but then I did! My own feelings shocked and terrified me; they seemed unnatural, I could not forgive my heart that they had found lodgment there. So much more absorbing than anything I had ever known, they seemed like a hallucination. I distrusted the sweet madness that possessed me, and by one rash, wicked act, sought to wrench our souls apart, thinking all the time that your happiness required the effort. I left your father's house—I—I placed an unloved man between you and me. I was mad, wicked. In one month after, when your father died, and I had not his scorn to dread, I would have given the world—but no matter what or how I have suffered—you are avenged—I am punished."

"Why should we revert to this?" said Lord Clare, gently. "The past is the past."

"I have wounded your pride to save mine," exclaimed Lady Jane, and her eyes sparkled with tears again. "It is your turn now, but if you knew—if you knew all, this bitter humiliation would be some atonement."

"I would not soothe my wounded pride at your expense, Lady Jane, still I thank you. It is something to know that a passion which cost me so much was not altogether scorned."

She was about to answer with some eagerness, but the sound of a carriage sweeping round the broad gravel walk to the front entrance, interrupted her. They both listened, looking earnestly at each other. Then she reached forth her hand, and said, smiling through her tears, "Cousin Clarence, we cannot be enemies, that is too unnatural"——

He wrung her hand with a sort of passion, dropped it, and rushed from the room. She stood a moment weeping, then her mouth brightened and curved into a smile, and with a proud air she swept by me, darkening the sunshine with her long, black garments. I followed her with my eyes, creeping on my hands and knees across the threshold that I might see her again, and be sure it was no fairy play I had witnessed. Then I sat down on the carpet, buried my face in the embroidery of my scarlet frock, and began to cry.

After a time, I could not tell how long, for my little soul was overflowing with emotions, I felt a hand laid gently on my head. I started, shook the long curls back from my face, and there was my father bending over me. His face was so pale and stern that I shrunk away, but he lifted me up by the arm, and grasping my hand till it pained me, led me forth.

As we approached the hall, I saw servants passing to and fro, removing packages, lap-dogs, and cushions from a travelling carriage at the door. A waiting-maid stood in the entrance, chatting directions in French and broken English, with a pretty King Charles held close to her bosom, which was amusing himself with the pink ribbons of her cap.

"Where is Tip? Will no one bring up Tip?" cried a voice from the staircase, and directly I saw a tall, spare woman, with the faintest pink in her cheeks, and the faintest blue in her eyes, coming down the steps. She had drawn off her gloves and untied her travelling bonnet. A few long, flaxen curls streamed down her shoulders with the purple ribbons, and one sickly white hand glided down the ebony balustrades.

"Bring up Tip, I cannot do anything without Tip," she continued to say, leaning forward and reaching out her arms for the dog, which the maid obediently brought to her.

I had a full view of this woman as she mounted the staircase fondling her dog, and from that moment loathed her from my soul. It was Lord Clare's sister.

My father paused and drew me suddenly back as his sister appeared on the stairs. The moment she was gone we moved rapidly through the hall, took a back entrance, and entered the grounds. He walked on with long, stern strides, clasping my hand, but unconscious that I was almost leaping to hold my pace even with his. We entered the wilderness, and then, for the first time, my father spoke.

"Zana," he said, "look at me here, in my eyes."

"I lifted my gaze to his steadily. His eyes were inflamed and full of trouble; they fell before mine, and left my little heart burning with strange triumph.

"Zana, you saw the lady?"

"Yes."

"And heard all that she was saying?"

"Yes."

"What was she talking about? Can you tell me?"

"I can tell you what she said, and what you answered."

"Word for word?" questioned my father, anxiously.

"Yes, sir, word for word."

"And you will repeat this to—to your mother?"

"No, I will not."

"Indeed," said Lord Clare, and I saw that his eye brightened with a look of relief, "and why not?"

“Because I will not. She would hate that dark lady as I do—she would cry more and more—she would know all about it!”

“About what?”

“About”—I hesitated, no words came to express the ideas that were fixed upon my mind so firmly. I knew as well as he did that he loved that lady, and that my mother was a burden, but how could the infant words at my command express all this? My father seemed relieved by my hesitation, and said more gently,

“Well, well, go home, tell your mother that I have company—my sister, you will remember—and that I may not be able to see her this evening.”

“She can wait!” I answered, swelling with indignation.

He led me to the verge of our garden, pointed along the path I should take, and turned back without kissing me. I was glad of this, though he had never done it before. My little soul was up in arms against him.

I did not go home, but wandered about the wilderness searching for birds’ nests, not because I enjoyed it, but a dread of seeing my mother for the first time kept me in the woods.

Her life was more quiet than ever after this, but you would not have known her for the same being. Her eyes grew larger and *so* wild; her figure became lithe and tall again; all the luxuriance of her beauty fled. She suffered greatly, even a child could see that.

Greenhurst was filled with company, and we seldom saw Lord Clare. Turner came to us every day, but he too seemed changed. The rich, dry humor so long a part of his nature forsook him. His visits were short, and he said little. Thus the season wore on, and I suffered with the rest. How many hours did I remain at the foot of some great oak or chestnut, thinking of that proud lady and her interview with my father. I kept my secret; not once had I alluded to that strange visit to the hall. It weighed upon me—at times almost choked me, but I felt that it must remain my own burden.

CHAPTER XIX.

MY FIRST HEART TEMPEST.

I HAD never seen a hunt in my life, for though Lord Clare kept horses and hounds, they had never been called out since our residence at Greenhurst. But now, we often heard the sweep of horses and the baying of dogs from the distant hills.

One day, I wandered off lured by this novel sound, and lost myself in a pretty valley. I am not sure if it was not beyond the verge of our park, for I exhausted myself with the fatigue of running after the sound, and fell breathless upon the moss beneath a clump of trees. While I lay bewildered and panting with fatigue, a group of horsemen rushed down the valley in full chase. Their red coats flashed between the leaves, and I saw hound after hound leaping through the brushwood. They disappeared like a flash of lightning. Then came the swift leap of other horses, and a lady appeared among the trees. Her hunter was on the full run, shooting like a thunderbolt through thickets, and over the broken ground with foam flashing from his nostrils, and blood dropping from his mouth where the curb had been ground into it. The lady had lost all control of her hunter. She reeled in the saddle, and nothing but her desperate hold upon the rein kept her from falling.

I knew her, notwithstanding the masculine hat and cravat, the black skirt sweeping behind her like a thunder-cloud, and the deathly paleness of her face. I knew her the first moment, and shrunk back into the undergrowth, not with fear but loathing. Oh, how I did hate that woman. Some persons think children cannot hate. They never studied a child like me. She came on, pale as marble, reeling with exhaustion, but with a strong will firing her eyes till they gleamed like stars beneath her hat. On she came. The horse veered. A ravine lay

before him. He stretched out his limbs and plunged forward. She saw death in the next instant, shrieked, flung up her arms, and the horse leaped from under her, lost his foothold on the opposite bank, reeled backward and fell with a fearful neigh into the depths of the ravine.

I did not move but looked on waiting to see if she would stir. I had no idea of death, but as I saw her pale face turned to the sky, her black garments sweeping like a pall down the bank, and her lifeless hand lying so still in the grass, a fierce interest seized me. It was not joy, nor pity, nor hate, but I thought of my mother, and hoped that the stillness would last forever.

A second horse came tearing his way down the valley. A scarlet coat flashed before my eyes and made me dizzy. Some one dismounted, a horse stood panting beneath his empty saddle. The fiery glow of crimson mingled confusedly with those black garments on the grass—then my sight cleared, and there was my father holding that woman in his arms—pressing her frantically to his bosom—raining kisses upon her marble forehead and her white eyelids. He held her back with his arms, looked into her face, uttered wild, sweet words that made my heart burn. Tears flashed down his cheeks, and fell like great diamonds in the blackness of her dress. His grief made him more of a child than I was.

He strained her to his heart, pressed his lips to hers, as if his own soul were pouring itself into her bosom.

“Jane, Jane, my love, my angel, my wife, listen to me, open your eyes! you are not dead—not gone—lost without knowing how much I love you. Oh, open those eyes—draw one breath, and I am your slave forever.”

She did not move, but lay cold and still in his arms. I was glad of it!

He laid her upon the grass with a groan that made even me start, and looked despairingly around.

“Will no one come?—must she die?—oh, my God, what can I do?”

He stood a moment, mute and still, looking, oh, how steadily, how mournfully down upon her. Then speaking aloud, and with a solemnity that made me tremble, he said,

"I have avoided her—struggled, suffered, tried to crush the great love that is within me, and this is the end! What is left to me?"

I saw a shudder pass over him, and knew that he was thinking of us—me and my mother.

Again his voice reached me, not loud, but deep and solemnly impressive. His mournful eyes were bent upon her, and he slowly sunk to her side.

"Let her live—only live," he said, "and so help me heaven, her own will shall dispose of me! Let all else perish, so she but breathe again!"

I rose from the ground and stood before him. My little hand was clenched, and my frame shook with passion seldom known to one of my tender years.

He started, as if a serpent had sprung up from the bosom of that beloved one, gazed in my eyes an instant, and then put me sternly back with his hand.

"Go," he said, with a sharp breath, as if every word were a pain—"go, weird child, I ask not what evil thing brings you to search my soul with those unnatural eyes—but go and tell your mother all that you can understand of this. Tell her that if this lady lives, she will be my wife—if not, I leave England forever. Tell her all!"

"I will tell her!" I said, looking fiercely into his eyes. "You shall never see her again, never, never, never!"

Such passion must have been fearful in a little child. He looked on me with a sort of terror.

"Tell your mother I will write, and send Turner to her," he said, more gently.

"I will say that you hate her and love this one!" was my fierce reply. "That is enough!—she will drop down like stone, as this one has!"

My eyes fell upon Lady Jane as I spoke. Her broad eyelids

quivered, and a faint motion disturbed the deathly white of her lips. These signs of life filled me with rage. I saw the breath struggling to free itself, and, lifting my tiny foot, dashed it down upon her bosom, looking into her face like an infant fiend to see if I had trampled the coming life away. Her eyes slowly opened, as if it were to the pressure of my foot, and then I flew reeling back against the bank—*my father had struck me.*

I rose and went away, but without shedding a tear—without looking back. I have been told that my face was very pale when I reached home, but that I was smiling steadily till the teeth gleamed between my lips.

When I reached home, my mother was in the little room that I have described, lying upon a couch, with her large, sleepless eyes wide open, and gazing upon the window.

“Get up, mother,” I said, seizing the cashmere shawl that lay over her, and casting it in a gorgeous heap on the floor—“get up ; I want to tell you something.”

She rose with a wild look, for my voice was sharp, and my face so strangely unnatural that it had the force of command.

“Come out into the garden—into the woods, mother.”

She followed me passively. I led her down the balcony steps, across the flower-beds, and into the wilderness. It was gloomy there. Shadows lay thick among the trees, and a leaden sky bent overhead. I liked it. In the broad sunshine I could not have told her. The anguish in her face frightened me even as it was.

She heard me through without uttering a word, but the gleam of her eyes and the whiteness of her face was more heart-rending than the wildest complaints. She held my hand all the time, and as I told her of the scene I had just witnessed, of his caresses, of the blow, her grip on my fingers became like a vice. But I did not wince, her own gipsy blood was burning hot in my veins.

I did not sleep that night, but lay upon the carpet in my mother's room, resolved not to be taken away till she was in bed.

Turner was there in the evening, and they conversed together alone, for more than an hour. The old man left us, with tears in his eyes. I heard my mother say to him in her low, sad voice, for she was always sad now,

“Do not fail me, my good friend ; I shall never ask another favor of you, so grant me this.”

“Poh, poh !” was his answer, “you will ask five thousand ; and I shall perform every one, trust old Turner for that !”

But there were tears in the old man's voice, I was sure of that. After his departure my mother was greatly disturbed, walking the room, wringing her hands, and convulsed with the tearless grief that rends one's heart-strings so silently.

CHAPTER XX.

MY MOTHERS LAST APPEAL.

WHEN it drew toward midnight, and she saw me, to all appearance, sleeping tranquilly on the floor, I heard a movement in the room as if my mother were preparing to go out. I opened my eyes and watched.

She took up the cashmere shawl and folded it over her head and person, leaving only the face exposed, after the fashion of a Spanish mantilla. Her face looked thin, but very beautiful, surrounded by those gorgeous colors, for her cheeks were of a burning scarlet ; and her eyes—in my life I have never seen an expression like theirs. It was like the reflection of a star in deep waters. She stole out through the balcony. I heard her descend to the garden, and followed, actuated, I think, by a vague dread that she was about to leave me forever.

She threaded the wilderness with a quick step, and kept her way through the grounds cut up into thickets and flower-beds

that lay around Greenhurst. I do not think that she had ever been there before in her life, but she seemed to find the way by intuition. I followed close, but unseen, and to my surprise saw her pass into the hall by the back entrance, through which Lord Clare had led me. The door was not entirely closed after her, and I crept through. The hall was dark, but she moved noiselessly on, gliding like a shadow up the broad staircase.

Now I was guided only by the faint ripple of her garments, for the upper halls lay in perfect darkness, and she was more in advance.

I saw by the glow of light that came into the darkness, that a door had been softly opened, in which a lamp was burning, and moved along the wall till I stood in view of a bed-chamber lighted as with moonbeams, for a lamp had been placed within an alabaster vase, evidently for this subduing purpose. I saw nothing distinctly in the room, but have a vague remembrance of a cloud of azure silk and rich lace brooding in one corner of the chamber—a couch underneath, white as mountain snow, and on it *that woman*, asleep, and my mother gazing upon her.

The sleeper scarcely seemed to breathe. A narcotic influence was evidently upon her, which had been used to still some previous pain; but all traces of anguish had departed from her forehead, from which the bright hair was swept back, giving its broad, massive grandeur to the light. A halo of happiness lay upon her face that made your breath come quick; the wealth of a great-soul seemed breaking over her noble features as she slept. The eyes underneath those broad lids were swimming in joy, that broke through like perfume from the white leaves of a rose. The atmosphere which hung about her seemed warm and fragrant, like that of an Indian summer in North America.

There stood her contrast, my gipsy mother, with the hot blood of her race burning in her eyes, her forehead, and that now firm mouth. I looked in her face, and thought she was about to spring upon her prey, for the passions burning there

grew fierce as death. She bent down and scrutinized the sleeper, then felt in her hair, and looked sharply around the room, I thought for some weapon.

"My oath, my oath!" she muttered, casting her great eyes around, "nothing but death can separate us; why not *her* death?"

I sprang forward, wild with terror, and caught hold of her dress.

"Mamma, oh, mamma, come away, come away," I pleaded, in a whisper.

She yielded to me, and walked slowly from the chamber, like one moving in a dream.

"Hush!" she said, as we stood in the hall, "I thought it had been *his* room. Where is it, child, you know?"

"Come away—come away!" I whispered, still keeping a firm grasp on her dress. "It is dark—I'm afraid."

She broke from me, and I lost her. The faint sound of a foot reached me once, but I had no courage to follow, and cowered down in the hall, shivering and noiseless. It seemed to me that I remained a year in that black stillness. I could endure it no longer, but groped my way to the staircase out into the open air.

The moon was up, but overwhelmed by an ocean of clouds. Now and then a leaden gleam broke out, and this gave me courage to wait and watch.

She came forth at last, and when I sprang toward her, caught me firmly by the hand.

"Come," she said, "the oath falls back here—the gipsy blood will not fail me when it is only us."

"What do you mean, mamma? Have you seen him, the Busne?"

"Yes!"

"Was he awake, mamma?"

"Awake!" and her laugh was fearful. "Child, do you think he could sleep?—can ever sleep again?"

"Did he say anything? Was he sorry for striking me?"

"Hush !" said my mother, sharply, " he has struck us both, the body for my child—the heart for me !"

" Did you strike him back, mother ?"

" No, but I will. The stone that crushes me shall fall on his soul."

Now I recognized my gipsy mother. She turned to me, and a straggling moonbeam touched her face.

" Zana, do you know what an oath is ?"

" Yes, mamma, I heard you mention the word in your sleep, and so asked Turner."

" I have sworn an oath, Zana. Will you help me keep it ?"

" I will help you, mamma."

" Let me make you strong with my kisses, Zana, you are no child."

I clung to her, answering back that wild caress, for my heart was burning with a sense of her wrongs.

" I was a child once, mother, but that has all gone by. I am something else now; not a woman like you, but sharper, like a little dagger with bright stones on the hilt, that you sometimes fasten up your hair with. The handle is so pretty; but the point, isn't that sharp ?"

" It was well I left it behind, to-night, Zana."

" You could not leave *me* behind, I *would* go !"

" Are you tired, Zana ?"

" No."

" Walk fast then, for we must be a long way from this before morning."

" Where are you going, mother ?"

" To keep my oath !"

We entered the cottage for the last time. My mother must have anticipated what was to happen, for she took me into her room, tore off my pretty scarlet frock, and replaced it with the garments of a little boy. Her own dress she changed also, and we left the house together, both clad in male garments, and each carrying a little bundle in our hands.

Where we went first, I do not know. The events of that

day and night were burned upon my memory, but after that I had only a vague idea of travelling day after day—of broad, stormy seas, a river that ran with waves of dull gold, orange groves, wild hills, and at last a city in the midst of beautiful plains, filled with antique houses, and beyond with snow-capped mountains looming against the sky. The grim towers of a ruin fixed itself on my memory, frowning between the city and those mountain-tops, and when I asked my mother of the name of this city and ruin, she answered briefly, "Granada, the Alhambra," nothing more.

I was not surprised at this, for since we left Greenhurst, she had scarcely uttered a longer sentence.

It was sunset when we came in sight of Granada. She paused in a recess of the hills, and opening our bundles, changed her dress and mine, casting away the male attire. I remember gazing at her with wonder as she stood before me in her strange dress. The blue bodice, the short crimson skirt, flowered and heavy with tarnished gold, the gorgeous kerchief knotted under her chin, this dress had been the contents of her bundle. Mine was more simple, a frock of maize-colored stuff brodered with purple. My feet and ankles were bare to the knees.

My mother bent down and kissed me.

"Are you a child now, Zana?"

"No, I am what you are."

"Come."

We descended into the Vega and passed through Granada long after dark. I was very tired and faint, but kept up with my mother, determined to hold firm to my promise. During our whole journey I had not once complained. We left the city and entered a deep, gloomy ravine, lighted up by a host of internal fires, that seemed to burn in the bosom of the hill. Wending along the dusty road, I saw that all the embankment was cut up into holes, from which the lights came, and that these were swarming with human beings.

We walked on, speaking to no one, till my mother stopped before one of these caves of which the door was shut. She

paused, and for one instant I felt her tremble, but the emotion was gone in a breath, and pushing the door open, she went in.

A little old woman sat in one end of the cave, rocking to and fro on a wooden stool, beneath the beams of a smoky lamp that stood in a niche over her head. The creature arose as we entered, passed one skeleton hand over her eyes, and muttered "who comes—who dares open my door, when I once shut it for the night?"

"One who fears nothing now, not even you, grandame," said my mother, advancing firmly up the cave.

The old woman kept her hand above those gleaming eyes, and pored keenly over the haggard face before her.

"Why have you come back?" she said, fiercely.

"To keep my oath, grandame!"

"Your oath. Is he dead, then? Is it his blood that makes your face so white!"

"No, he is safe—it may be, happy," answered my mother, and for the first time since we left England, I heard her voice falter. "He repudiates the caloe marriage. He loves another. I saw her under his roof. He will make her his wife. Grandame, I have come back to die. It is all of my oath that I can redeem."

"Under his roof? he will marry her. Girl, where was Papita's poniard, that you did not strike?"

"She looked innocent in her sleep. I could not do it. She knew nothing of me, of my wrongs, or the vengeance that threatened her. A word would have stabbed her deeper than your poniard, grandame, but I could not speak it.

"You came away, and left her alive?" shrieked the old woman fiercely.

"I could *not* kill the thing he loved," answered my mother, with pale firmness.

"You came away, leaving these two traitors to marry and scoff at the gipsy!"

"The lady knows nothing, and cannot scoff at us. He will

never revile one who could have driven her from his path by pointing to his child, and saying only, '*he has been mine!*' but chose rather to come here and die."

"It is useless, grandame—these frowns, the locking of those sharp teeth. The desperate have no fear. I have disgraced my people, and am ready to redeem my oath."

"And what is this?" said Papita, touching me with a loathing scowl.

"My child, and his," answered my mother, and I felt her fingers close tight on my hand.

"Oh, you did well to bring her. There is yet a drop of the old blood left; I see it in her face."

The weird creature drew nearer and kissed me. I bore it without a shudder.

"Can it be to-morrow?" said my mother, calmly, as if she had been speaking of a June festival.

"Yes," was the savage reply. "The people will not wait, Chaleco, most of all."

"Let him be sent for."

"No," said the Sibyl with a touch of feeling, "he shall not gloat over your shame more than the rest. Go in yonder—you have broken one half the oath, for the rest"—

"I am ready—I am ready, only let it be soon," said my mother—"at daylight."

"In yonder! daylight will soon come," answered the Sibyl, pointing to the inner room. "I will go and prepare the people. They thought you dead. How they will stare when Papita tells them of her trick. They think her old, worn out, dull—she who can throw sand in the eyes of a whole tribe."

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CHAPTER XXI.

THE OATH REDEEMED.

PAPITA went out muttering hoarsely to herself, as we cowered together in that close hole. A great tumult arose from without. The tramp of feet, the hooting of voices, and wild murmurs drew near and nearer. My mother did not tremble, but when the door flew open, she stood out in the cave, holding me in her arms. The light from a dozen torches fell redly over us, a hundred fierce eyes glared in, and the door was blocked with grim, shaggy human heads, all waving and shaking in ferocious astonishment.

She stood before them, like a dusky statue, her heavy, raven hair falling in masses down her temples, and her pale hands locked around me so tightly that I breathed with pain. As the torchlight fell upon her dress, some one in the crowd recognized it as the wedding array that had been purchased for her marriage with Chaleco, and a low howl ran through the crowd.

"She mocks us, she mocks us with her shame—take her forth at once. It is a long way to the mountains, and by daylight the authorities may be upon us," cried a stern voice.

"To the mountains—to the mountains!" ran through the throng, and then one or two from the crowd rushed in and would have seized my mother. But the old Sibyl placed herself in their way, confronting them with fierce wrath.

"Her father was a count, and her father's father. It is of her own free will she comes. Let her walk forth alone. Think you that the grandchild of Papita is not strong enough to die?"

The crowd fell back, forming a wall from each side the door up the ravine. Through this lane of fierce, human bloodhounds my mother walked firmly, holding me still in her arms. By her side went the old Sibyl, regarding the tribe with a look of keen triumph, exulting in the desperate strength that nerved their victim. She gazed on the unearthly brilliancy of her countenance, as the torch-light fell upon it, and cried out with fierce ecstasy, "see, it is my soul in her eyes—my blood in her cheeks. Thus would old Papita go forth had she tarnished the honor of her people."

On we went, crowding upward through the mountain passes till the snow became thick beneath our feet, and Granada lay diminished and indistinct in the distance. The dawn found us in a hollow of the mountains, with snow peaks all around, and half choking up the little valley. Nothing was seen but rocks protruding through the virgin snow, and a group of stone cairns peering through the drifts in the bottom of the valley. The rosy sunrise broke over the peaks as we entered this gloomy pass, but it did not penetrate to us. My mother lifted her eyes to the illuminated snow, a faint quiver ran through her form, and I felt the arms that supported me tremble. I threw myself upon her neck, and clung there, weeping. She shivered in my embrace. I felt her limbs giving way, and shrieked aloud. She answered me with a long, long kiss, that froze itself into my heart, for I knew that it was the last. Then she lifted up her face and said, in a clear, sad voice, "who will take my child?"

"Give her to me, Aurora!"

The voice was full of compassion, and a wild, haggard man, in the remnants of what had been a picturesque costume, came forward with his arms extended. His fierce heart had yielded at last. There was relenting in his gesture and voice.

My mother turned her eyes mournfully upon him.

"I have wronged you, Chaleco, but now"—she turned her eyes steadily toward the cairns, and added, "*all* will be atoned for."

"I want no atonement—I am sick of revenge," was the impetuous answer. "Give me your child."

"Chaleco, one promise—take her back to England. You will find plenty of gold sewed up in her dress. I was out of my mind—mad to bring her here. Take her back ; she is bright beyond her years, and will tell him all better than any one else. Will you promise this, Chaleco, for the sake of old times ?"

She smiled a pale, miserable smile, as she made the request.

"Give me your child ; I will take her to England !" answered Chaleco, in a hoarse voice.

"That is all," answered my mother, gently, "I am ready now."

She turned away her face, and forcing my arms from her neck, held me toward the gipsy chief.

I shrieked, and struggled to get back, but he folded my face to his bosom, and thus smothering my cries, walked rapidly away.

Notwithstanding the close pressure of his arms, I heard a shriek, then the sound of dull, heavy blows, as if stone or iron were falling against some yielding substance. A groan burst from Chaleco. He shuddered from head to foot, and throwing himself forward, forced my face down into the snow, and buried his own there also, moaning and trembling.

The blows grew duller, heavier, and a soft, smothered noise mingled with them. No other sound was in the glen, not a hum, not a footfall, nothing but these muffled sounds, and the groans of Chaleco. Then a hush, like that of midnight, fell over us. Chaleco held his breath, and I struggled no longer ; it seemed as if the cold snow had struck to my heart.

At last Chaleco arose, trembling with weakness, and taking me in his arms again, staggered through the snow down the glen. The tribe stood in a great circle round a cairn that had not existed when we entered the "Valley of Stones." The stillness appalled me. I broke from Chaleco's feeble hold, and rushed forward, calling for my mother.

The old Sibyl seized me by the arm, pointed to the cairn, and answered, "She is there !" I looked fearfully upon the stony pyramid, but saw nothing, till my eyes fell downward to the snow at its base—it was crimson with blood. Then I knew what death was, and what her oath meant. I grew sick, turned, and staggering toward the gipsy chief, fell at his feet.

I remember, dimly, being in the cave once more, and seeing the old Sibyl counting gold into her lap. I remember, also, that Chaleco was there, and she said to him, pointing to me :

"No, she will not die, half the oath only is accomplished, she must do the rest."

Then the cairn, with its reddened base, came before me, and I fell away again.

Months must have been oblivion to me, for my next clear idea was in England. I lay in a canvas tent pitched by the wayside, half-way between Greenhurst and the neighboring village. Chaleco and the Sibyl were with me, dressed after the vagrant fashion of those broken tribes of our people who infest England. I was in rags, and seated on the ground, wondering how this change had been made. Chaleco stood by the entrance of the tent watching ; the old woman kept in a remote corner, and while I pondered over the meaning of it all, a merry chime of bells swept across the fields, that made my heart leap. I broke into a laugh, and crept toward the entrance of the tent, enticed by the sunlight that sparkled on the sward.

I had placed myself at Chaleco's feet, when the sound of an advancing cavalcade came from toward the village. Chaleco shaded his eyes, and I saw them glow like coals beneath his hand. First came a troop of children with baskets and aprons full of blossoms, scattering them thick in the highway. Then followed a carriage, with four black horses, streaming with rosettes and white ribbon, followed by others decorated after the same fashion, and filled with richly dressed people. The children halted, and gathered around the first carriage, tossing

showers of roses over its occupants. In the midst of this blooming storm, I saw my father and *that woman*. The gleam of her silver brocade, the snowy softness of the bridal veil made me faint again. The snow drifts in the mountains of Spain, encrimsoned and trampled, swept before my dizzy senses. As I saw my father half enveloped by the waves of those glittering bridal garments, but still pale and looking so anxious, it seemed to me as if those soft drifts had been shovelled over him in mockery of my mother's death.

I asked no question, but gathered from my companions, who conversed in cautious tones, that Lord Clare and his bride would rest some days at Greenhurst before entering upon their wedding tour. I had no strength, no spirit then. Instead of becoming angry, I was faint, and lay down in the tent, weeping feebly as another child of my years might have done in its illness.

I remember hearing shouts, and seeing flashes of fireworks that went off in the village that night, and I saw old Papita and Chaleco hold up a small vial between them and the lamp, filled with a purple liquid—then, as in a dream, they passed away from the tent.

It was deep in the night, when I started from my sleep. Papita was shaking me by the shoulder, her face was close to mine, and it looked like a death's head.

"Awake!" she said, reeling on her feet, as if intoxicated. "It is over—Papita has kept her oath—the work is done. Get up, last of my race, and see how a woman of Egypt can die."

The terrible light of her eyes fired me with strength. I stood up, and asked what she had done—why she talked of dying.

"I have left the bride stiff and stark on her silken couch up yonder. A drop of this—only one drop—in the water which sparkled on her toilet was enough. I stood by her bed when the bridegroom came—*she* was smiling on her pillow. The

drao that I distill, always leaves smiles behind it. He saw me, old Papita, whose blood he has shamed, whose wrath he has braved, and while he stood frozen into a statue, I glided away, away, away forever ! forever more."

She crooned over these last words in a low mutter, and sunk slowly down to the earth.

Chaleco bent over her.

"Mother Papita," he said, "how is this? you have not drank of the drao !"

The old woman gave a cough that rattled in her throat.

"There was no need, my count. Did you think the old frame would not give out when its work was done? I knew it — I knew it. Come hither child, and take 'the gipsy's legacy,' hate, hate, hate to the Busne, the enemies of our people."

She struggled to a sitting posture, and tore the great ruby rings from her ears.

"Your dagger, Chaleco. Quick, quick," she said.

Chaleco took a poniard from his bosom. The Sibyl seized it, and thrust the sharp point through each of my ears, then she locked the rubies into the wounds, while the blood trickled down their antique settings.

It is your mother's blood that baptizes them, remember."

As the Sibyl spoke she staggered to her feet and pressed her cold hands upon my forehead, passing them down my face again and again. At first the touch made me shudder ; then a feeling of dull calm came over me. The excitement left my nerves, and I lay like one in a trance. The past was all gone, only a vivid consciousness of the present remained ; my eyes were closed, my limbs still as death, but my senses seized upon every motion, every whisper, and locked them up in my memory, creating each instant a new past for that which had left me.

"Now leave her to the destiny that she must surely work out, Papita's vow is redeemed."

When the old woman said these words, her voice seemed far off and unreal as the echoes of some forgotten horror. I heard

her gasp for breath ; moans broke from her lips—a sharp cry, and her limbs fell together in a heap, like a skeleton when its wires give way.

For a moment all was deathly stillness, Chaleco held his breath—some brooding evil seemed to fall upon the tent.

Still I lay bound in that mesmeric trance, conscious, but utterly helpless. I heard Chaleco steal forth, and for a long time the grating of a spade reached me from the depths of a neighboring hollow. Then came the fall of earth, spadeful after spadeful, followed by stealthy footsteps coming toward the tent again.

Chaleco came close to me, stooped down and took the antique rings from my ears. I was numb and could not feel the pain ; but consciousness utterly left me after that. The iron thread of my mother's life was woven into mine that terrible, terrible night.

CHAPTER XXII.

LOST MEMORIES.

I FOUND myself lying in a gipsy's tent perfectly alone, dizzy, feverish, and so parched with thirst that it seemed to me one drop of water would satisfy every want I could ever have again. An earthen pitcher stood near the fresh hay on which I was lying. I reached forth my feeble hand and slanted it down, till the bottom glistened on my sight. Then I fell back weeping. It was empty, not a drop—not a drop ! How terrible was that thirst. I felt the tears rushing down my cheek, and strove to gather them in my hand, thinking, poor thing, to moisten my burning lips with the drops of my own sorrow. The wind blew aside the fall of canvas that concealed the entrance to my tent, and I saw through it a glimpse of the bright morning ; clover

fields bathed in fragrant mist ; soft, green meadow grasses sparkling with dew. Then the whole strength of my being centered in one great wish—water ! My wild eyes were turned in every direction where the soft drops seemed flashing, dancing, leaping around me like a whirlwind of diamonds. I closed my eyes and strove to shake the hallucination from my brain. A moment's rest, and there was another calm glimpse of the dewy morning. I wonder if Paradise ever looks half so beautiful to the angels.

Dizzy and fascinated, I crept across the tent on my hands and knees, dragging the loose hay after me, and moaning softly with each strain upon my shrinking muscles, till I crept into the deep verdure. How softly the cool dew-drops rained over me as I lay down at length in the soft meadow grass. My face, my arms, and my little, burning feet were bathed as with new life. I lay still, and laughed with a glee that frightened up a lark from her nest close by. The young ones began to flutter, and piped forth their tiny music as if to comfort the lone child that had stolen to their home, still more helpless than themselves.

I swept my hand across the grass, gathering up the dew, which I drank greedily. Then I rolled over and over, bathing my feet and my garments till my face came on a level with the young larks. They uttered a cry, and opened their little golden throats as if for food. This brought the mother-bird back again, who circled over and over us, uttering her discontent in wild gushes of song. The flutter of her plumage between my eyes and the sun—the softened notes as she grew comforted by my stillness—the flutter that seemed half smothered in thistle-down still going on in the nest—the balmy air, the bath of dew—some, perhaps all of these things slaked the fire in my veins, and I fell asleep.

Did I dream ? Had I wandered off again into delirium, or was the thing real ? To this day I cannot tell ; but as I lay in that meadow which bounded the wayside, a long funeral procession crept by me, fringing the meadow with blackness, and

gliding away sadly, dreamily, toward a village church, whose spire cut between me and the sky.

Time went by like thistle-down upon the wind. The sky was purple above me. Thousands and thousands of great stars twinkled dreamily through the deep stillness. The dew lay upon me like a shower. I turned softly, and as I moved, the lark stirred above her young. My sleep had been so like death that the bird feared me no longer.

If I had a connected thought it was this—the lark had come back to her young; with her soft bosom she kept them from the damp and cold night air. I was young: it was night: the dew fell like rain: I had no strength to move. *Where was my mother?*

I could not answer the question; my brain was too feeble, and ached beneath the confused images that crowded upon it. The funeral train, ridges of snow, heaped-up stones, flashes of crimson, as if a red mantle were floating over me, disjointed fragments like these were all the answer that came back to my heart, as it drearily asked where am I? where is my mother?

Probably another day went by; I do not know, for a heavenly sleep settled on me. But at last—it must have been sometime near noon—I saw the lark settle down by her nest with some crumbs of bread in her bill. I watched the young ones as they greedily devoured it, and a craving desire for nourishment stole over me. I envied the little ragged birdlings, and wondered how they could be so greedy and so selfish.

The mother flew away again, and I watched her with longing eyes. She might take compassion on my hunger. Surely those greedy young ones had eaten enough. She would think of me now that they were satisfied. How eagerly I watched for some dark speck in the sky, some noise that should tell me of her return! She came at last, shooting through the atmosphere like an arrow. After whirling playfully over, and again above our heads, she settled down by her nest, and I saw that her bill was distended by a fine blackberry. The largest and sauciest young one, who always crowded his brethren down into the

nest when food appeared, rose upward with a hungry flutter and held his open bill quivering just beneath the delicious berry.

My heart swelled. I uttered an eager cry, and flung out my hand. The lark, startled in affright, dropped the fruit, and it fell into my palm. What did I care for the angry cry of the old bird, or the commotion among her nestlings? The fruit was melting away—oh, how deliciously!—between my parched lips! When that was gone, I lifted my hands imploringly to the angry bird, and asked for more. She was all the friend I had, and it seemed as if she must understand my terrible want. She went away and returned; but oh, how my poor heart ached when she lighted, and with her eye turned saucily on me, dropped a grain or two of wheat for her young!

Tears crowded to my eyes. Who would aid me—so hungry, so miserable, such a little creature, more helpless than the birds of heaven, and they so pitiless? I turned my face away; the young larks had become detestable to me. I was tempted to hurt them, to dash my hand down into the nest and exterminate the whole brood; but the very thought exhausted me, and I began to weep again with faint sighs that would have been sobs of anguish but for my prostration.

I lifted my head and strove to sit upright, looking wearily around with a vague expectation of help. At a little distance was a stone wall, and climbing over it a blackberry bush in full fruit, clusters on clusters glittering in the sunshine. The tears rained down my cheeks. I turned my eyes upon the young larks and feebly laughed out my triumph. I crept forward on my hands and knees, pulled myself along by clenching handfuls of the meadow grass, and, at length, found myself prostrate and panting by the wall. Most of the fruit was above my reach, but some clusters fell low, and while my breast was heaving and my poor hands trembled with exhaustion, I began to gather and eat. Fortunately, it was impossible for me to pluck enough of the fruit to injure myself, and with the grateful taste in my mouth, I lay contemplating the clusters over-

head with dreamy longing, wondering when I should be able to climb up the stones and gather them.

It is strange that while my senses were so acute in all things that pertained to my animal wants, all remembrance of the past had forsaken me. I could neither remember who I was, nor how I came to be alone in the meadow. My whole range of sympathy and existence went back no farther than the lark's nest and its inmates, that had seemed to mock at my hunger in the midst of their own abundance. Was it from this that I drew my first lesson of sympathy for the destitute, and hate for the heartless rich?

Some vague remembrance of a tent that had sheltered me did seem to haunt by brain; but when I lifted myself up by the wall it had disappeared, and that, with the rest, floated away into indistinctness. It was not that all memory of the past had left me. I knew what the relations of life were—knew well that I ought to have a mother to care for me—some one to bring me food and arrange my garments; and, through the cloudiness of my ideas, one beautiful face always looked down upon me, like the rich, dark-eyed women whom we find repeated, and yet varied over and over again in Murillo's pictures. I knew that this face should have been my mother's, but all around it was confused, like the clouds in which the great artist sometimes buries his most ideal heads.

But even this beautiful remembrance was floating and visionary. I had no strength to grasp a continued thought. Even the aspect of nature, the meadows, the distant woods, and the gables of a building that shot up from their midst, had a novel aspect. The feeble impression thus left was like that of bright colors to an infant. I felt happier, more elastic. The world seemed very beautiful, and a keen desire for action came upon me. I tried to walk, but fell down like an infant making its first attempt. I made another effort, tottered on a few paces, and lay quietly down overcome with a desire to sleep. Then I started again, creeping, staggering a little on my feet, resting every few minutes, but all the while making progress toward

the building whose gables I had seen in the distance. I had no definite object; the instincts of humanity alone no doubt induced me to seek a human habitation.

I must have passed over the spot where the tent had stood, for some loose hay littered the grass in one place, and among it I found a crust of dry bread. I uttered a low shout, and seizing it with both hands, sat down in the hay and began to eat voraciously. Never, never have I tasted food so delicious. I cannot think of it yet without a sensation of delight !

As I sat devouring the precious morsel, there came a sweet noise to my ear—a soft gurgle, that made me pause in my exquisite banquet and listen. Old associations were not altogether lost. I knew by the sound that a spring or brook was near, and my joy broke forth in a laugh which overpowered the flow of the waters. I crept on toward the sound, hoarding the fragments of my crust. It was a beautiful little spring gushing up from the cleft in a rock which lay cradled in a hollow close by. The rock was covered with moss and the most delicate lichen, thick with tiny, red drops, more beautiful than coral. The water rushed down in a single stream, slender and graceful as the flight of a silver arrow, and spread away with soft murmurs, through the peppermint and cowslips that lined the hollow. I drank of the water slowly, like a little epicure, enjoying the cool taste on my lips with exquisite relish. Then, enticed by the fragrance, I gathered a stem or two of the mint, and laying the moist leaves on my bread, made a meal, such as one never takes twice in a life-time.

The waters gathered in a pretty pool beneath the rock, as bright and scarcely larger than a good sized mirror. I turned, after my bread was exhausted, and saw myself reflected in the pool—not myself at the time, for I supposed it another child—a poor, little, miserable thing, in an old dress of torn and soiled embroidery, whose original richness gave force to its poverty-stricken raggedness. Her little feet were bare and white, and great, black eyes, illuminating a miserable pale face, like lamps that could never burn out, were staring at me so wildly, that I

flung out my arms to repulse her. She also flung up her bare arms, and looked more like a weird thing than ever. The action terrified me. I burst into tears, and clambered up the hollow, looking back in terror lest the starved creature should follow me.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE THRESHOLD OF MY FATHER'S HOUSE.

I AROSE and moved forward, still keeping the gables in view, now lying down on a bank for rest, now pausing to gather a wild berry, but always diminishing the distance between myself and the dwelling.

The night came on, but excitement kept me wakeful. I had no lonesome feelings. The skies above were crowded with stars, that seemed like smiling play-fellows glad to have me in sight. The moonbeams fell through the branches—for I was beneath trees now—and played around me like a cloud of silver butterflies. Then came the delicious scent of blossoms, the trees grew thin, and velvet turf yielded luxuriously to my naked feet. Beautiful flowers were budding around me, enameling the turf in circles, mounds, and all sorts of intricate figures. These, like the stars, seemed old playmates. Fuchias, heliotrope, moss roses—I recognized them with a gush of joy, and talked to them softly as I stole along.

A hard, gravel walk glistened before me, sweeping around the proud old mansion whose gables I had seen. I entered it, but the gravel hurt my feet, and leaving their little prints in dew upon it, I turned an angle of the building. Now something of terror, a vague, dark, impassable memory seemed floating between me and the stars. A shadow from the building fell over me like a pall. I grew cold and began to shiver, but still moved on toward the moonlight.

It was reached. I looked up, and before me was a great stone doorway, surmounted with masses of dark marble, chiselled so deeply that the hollows seemed choked up with shadows which contrasted densely with the moonbeams on the surface. Half a dozen broad, granite steps led to the doorway. I stood upon these steps and looked upward. A strange sensation crept over me. I grew colder, weaker, and sunk upon the stones with my head resting upon the door sill. A rush of confused thoughts crowded upon my brain and stunned it. I lay motionless, but with a vague idea of existence.

The first thing that I remember was confused noises in the dwelling, that sort of bee-like hum which accompanies the uprising of a large household. Sometimes the sound of a door jarred through my whole frame, and then I would drop away into some stage of unconsciousness; it might be the sleep of pure exhaustion, or insensibility, I cannot tell.

At last there was a rustle and rush in the hall, the sound of feet and brooms set in motion, with confused voices and the ponderous movement of a door close to my head, that jarred through and through me. A tumultuous sound of voices followed, a hastily-dropped floor-brush fell across me—laughing, exclamations, bustling and noise; then I heard a woman's voice say distinctly above the rest, "Ah! here comes one who knows something—he can tell us what it is!"

Then a voice followed that sharpened, my faculties like a draught of wine, "Well, what are you chattering about the door-stead for, like so many magpies around a church steeple? Can the housekeeper find you no better business?"

"Oh, come and see for yourself," answered a peevish voice, "is it a witch, an imp—a—a—do tell us, Mr. Turner, you who have been in foreign parts and know all sorts of outlandish creatures by heart?—look!—look!—its great black eyes are wide open now; you can see them glistening through the hair that lies all sorts of ways over its face. Gracious me, they burn into one like a live coal!"

"Stand back," said the male voice, "stand back, and let me

have room. The creature is human ! It may be—it may be—no, no, poor, wild thing—no, no, God forbid !”

The voice was broken, eager and full of anxiety. I felt the long hair parted back from my forehead, and opening my eyes, saw a little, old face, wrinkled and contracted, but oh, how comforting !

“Those great, wild eyes—those lips pinched, blue !—this skeleton frame—no, no, not hers, thank God for that, I could not have borne it !”

“What is the creature ?—what shall we do with it ?” inquired the female voice.

“What is it ?” said the old man, looking up from my face, “what is it ? a human soul almost leaving the body—a child’s soul ! What is it ?—don’t you see, woman ?”

“Is it dying ? can it speak ?” was the rejoinder.

The old man lifted me in his arms without answering, and laid my head on his shoulder. A strange gush of pleasure came over me, and my soul seemed melting away in tears—silent, quiet tears, for I was too feeble for noisy emotions. I stole one arm around his neck, and nestled my cheek close to his. Was the action familiar to the old man ? With me it was natural as the infant’s habit of lifting its hands to the mother’s mouth, that it may gather her kisses.

He did not return the caress, but almost dropped me from his arms. His bosom heaved, some exclamation that he seemed about to utter broke into a groan, and directly I felt tears running down the cheek that touched mine.

“Why, what are you about, Mr. Turner ? What on earth are you thinking of ? Don’t you see how forlorn and ragged the creature is, and holding it against your new mourning, what has come over you ?” exclaimed the housemaid, horrified and astonished.

The old man made no reply, but looked searchingly down on my old frock, as if it had some deep interest to him.

“Very well, every one to his own business,” cried the housemaid, resenting his silence, “you hug that little witch as if it

was your own—ha, ha, who knows!—who knows! oh, if my lord could but see you!”

The old man had been holding up a fold of my frock during this speech, and was still intently examining the soiled embroidery. His thin face writhed and twitched in all its features; but when he dropped the fold, it settled into an expression of distressing certainty.

The old man looked on her with mournful sternness.

“Before heaven, I wish he could see us—his old servant, and—and—tush! woman, go about your work—go all!”

“I wonder how she come here, at any rate,” persisted the housemaid, saucily. “Gracious goodness! but the thing does seem to take to you, Mr. Turner, so natural. Isn’t it a sight to behold?”

“Peace, woman!” cried the old man, stamping his foot till it rang on the tessellated floor. “Have you no decency?”

“Decency, indeed!”

As the housemaid tossed her head, with this pert rejoinder, a tall, haughty woman came through a side door and moved toward us. Her morning dress swept the marble as she walked, and long silken tassels swayed the cord slowly to and fro, which bound the sumptuous garment to her waist. She held a tiny dog in her arms, which began to bark furiously as he saw me.

“What is all this?” she said, addressing Turner. “Something found on the door-step?—where is it? what is it like?”

“Very like a hungry, sick, dying little girl,” replied Turner, pressing me closer to him, “nothing more!”

“Who can it be? have you the least idea, Turner?” cried the lady.

“I, madam—I, how can that be?”

“Don’t hide its face, Turner. Is it pretty? Hush, Tip. Jealous already—there, there!”

While the lady was soothing her dog, Turner, with much reluctance and many distortions, turned my head upon his bosom, and the lady saw my face. She started.

"Heavens !—why, it is a perfect little animal !" she exclaimed, drawing back. "What eyes !—how frightfully large ! Mr. Turner, Mr. Turner, how very imprudent in you ! It may be contagious fever or small-pox. Do take the creature away !"

She drew slowly back while giving this command, with a look of absolute terror.

"Take her away—quite away !" she kept repeating.

"Shall I leave her on the door-steps, madam ?" said he, with a sort of rebuking humor.

There was something so familiar about his curt, dry way of putting the question, that I felt more at home with him than ever.

"Turner—Turner, this is trifling, inexcusable ! but that you are a favorite servant of my poor brother's, I would not endure it an instant."

"I am a man ! At least I was, till this poor, poor—there I am at it again—till she made me cry like a baby for the first time in my life ; but I will obey you—I will carry her off, not that her disease is contagious—souls are not catching, at any rate, in this neighborhood."

The old man muttered over these last words to himself ; then lifting his voice said in a more respectful tone, "Madam, your orders—where am I to place the child ?"

"Anywhere. It is not of the least consequence—take it down to the village. I fancy some of the tenants would like it of all things. I have no right to receive incumbrances in Lord Clare's house during his absence."

"Lord Clare never sent a starving fellow-creature from his door yet," answered Turner, stoutly. "It is not in him."

"Starving ?—what horrible words ! Why, no one starves on this estate."

Turner did not listen. He was looking down into my face, his countenance stirring as one who ponders over a painful subject. I lay feebly in his arms, contented as a lamb, my little heart beating tenderly against his bosom. At last he carried me out into the open air.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A PARADISE OF REST.

TURNER walked fast, without speaking, till the shadow of some tall trees fell over us, then his step grew heavier, and he looked in my face from time to time, with an expression of strange tenderness.

"Do you remember me?" he said at last, but in a hesitating whisper.

I struggled hard with my weakness, and tried to think.

"Speak, little one, we are all alone, don't be afraid of me, old Turner you know."

"Yes, yes," I murmured faintly enough, "she called you Turner."

"She! what she are you talking of, little one?"

"The tall lady up yonder with the dog," I answered; for struggle as I would, my mind refused to go farther back.

He looked at me with a strange expression.

"Then it was not your—your mother?"

Instantly that face half buried in clouds came before me.

"She—my mother never speaks," I said, "she looks at me through the clouds, but does not say a word."

He stopped, gazed at me wistfully a moment, and then bending his head closer to mine, whispered, "Tell me, tell old Turner, where is she?"

"She—who?" I whispered back.

"Your mother, Aurora—your mother, child."

"I don't know, she was here just now."

"Here!" he said, looking around, "here?"

"Did you not see her face among the clouds, close down here, a minute ago? I did."

He felt my cheek with his palm, took hold of my hands and feet—"She has no fever," he muttered, "what does all this mean?"

"Tell me," he said, after a little, "where did you go—you and your mother?"

"Nowhere."

"What, was she in the neighborhood?"

"I don't know."

"Not—speak, child! not within a few weeks, not since Lady Clare died?"

"I think she is always with me, but the lark fed her young ones when they wanted something to eat, but she never fed me, and I was very, very hungry. Why did she look upon me from the clouds, but never give me one morsel to eat or a drop to drink?"

"Poor child—poor, poor child," said the old man, kissing me, oh, how tenderly—"try and think—make one effort—I do so want to know the truth—where have you been these many months?"

I tried to think, but it confused me, and at last I answered, with starting tears,

"Indeed, I do not know."

He bent his face close to mine, and kissed away the tears that stood on my cheeks—then he questioned me again.

"Is your mother dead?"

Dead! the word struck like cold iron upon my heart. I shuddered on the old man's bosom. My brain ached with the weight of some painful memory, but it gave back no distinct answer. It seemed as if his question had heaped mountains of snow around me, but I could only reply,

"Dead, what is that?"

He heaved a deep groan and walked on, muttering strangely to himself.

I knew that he was carrying me over innumerable flower beds, for the air was rich with the scent of heliotrope and flowering daphnas, the breath of my old playmates. Then he

mounted up some steps, tearing his way through a quantity of vines, and forcing open a sash window with his foot, carried me in.

It was a luxurious apartment, but very gloomy, and silent as a catacomb. The shutters were closed, the air unwholesome and heavy with the odor of dead flowers. I saw nothing distinctly, though my eyes roved with a sort of fascination from object to object. Something deeper than memory stirred in my soul. A chillness seized me, and I longed to go away.

Turner passed on, evidently glad to leave the chamber, and did not pause again till we reached a room that was smaller and more cheerful. He held me with one arm, and with his right hand threw open the shutters.

The sash was a single piece of plate-glass, transparent as water. Curtains of gossamer lace and rose-colored silk fell over it, through which the morning sunshine glowed like the dawning of a rainbow.

The old man made me sit up in his arms and look around while he curiously regarded my face. I have said the room was flooded with soft light. The walls were covered with hangings of a delicate tint, sprinkled with rose buds. A carpet of snowy ground, with bouquets of gorgeous flowers scattered over it, as if in veritable bloom, covered the floor. A diminutive easy-chair and sofa, cushioned with rose-colored silk stood opposite to a small bed of gilded ivory, gleaming through a cloud of gossamer lace, which fell in soft, snowy waves from a small hoop of white and gold, like the bedstead, swung to the ceiling by a cord and tassel of silk, twisted with golden threads.

Turner looked at me anxiously, as my eyes wandered around this beautiful room, fitted up evidently for a child—for the bedstead was scarcely larger than a crib, and everything bore evidence of a very youthful occupant.

A pleasant sensation crept over me, as I gazed languidly around. The atmosphere seemed familiar, and I felt a smile stealing to my mouth.

Turner saw it, and almost laughed through the tears that were clouding his eyes.

"Do you like this?" he whispered, softly.

"Oh, yes, so much!"

"Shall I put you into that pretty bed?"

"No, no!" I shrieked, with a sudden pang, "it is white like a snow-drift; I would rather go back to the meadow and sleep with the larks."

The old man looked sad again. He carried me close to the bed, and put some folds of the curtain in my hand; but I shrank back appalled by their unmixed whiteness. He could not comprehend this shuddering recoil, but sought to remove the cause. Curtains of silk, like those at the window, were looped through the ivory hoop. These he shook loose till they mingled in bright blossom colored waves with the lace. Then I began to smile again, and a sweet home feeling stole over me.

Turner carried me in his arms to the door and called aloud. A woman answered, and came into the room. When her eyes fell upon me they dilated, grew larger, and she uttered a few rapid words in some language that I did not understand. Turner answered her in the same tongue, then all at once she fell upon her knees, and raising her clasped hands began to weep.

Turner addressed her again, and with eager haste she prepared a bath, brought forth night clothes of the finest linen, and laid me in the bed exhausted, but tranquil and sleepy.

I heard Turner and the woman moving softly around my bed. I knew that tears and kisses were left upon my face, and then I slept, oh, how sweetly!

Ah, what heavenly dreams possessed me during the days and weeks which I spent in that delightful little chamber! The delirium which accompanied my relapse into fever was like an experience in fairy land. Fantastic as the visions that haunted me were, the most glowing changes of beauty broke through them all. Music floated by me on each breath of air that

gushed through the windows. Every sunbeam that stole through the gossamer curtains arched over me like a rainbow. It seemed to me that whole clouds of humming-birds floated through the room, filling it with the faint music of their wings. Then the pretty myths were chased away by fantastic little creatures in human form; smiling, fluttering, and full of the most exquisite fun, they trampled over my bed, and nestled, mischievously, among the blossom-colored hangings. I became wild with admiration of their rosy bloom, of their comical ways. I laughed at their pranks by the hour, and strove with insane glee to catch them with my hand, or imprison them under the bed-clothes. But they always evaded me, making the most grotesque faces at my baffled efforts. I could see them waltzing in dozens upon the counterpane, and sitting upon my pillow tangling their tiny hands and feet in my hair, shouting, laughing, and turning summersets like little mad-caps whenever I made a dart at them with my hands. So we kept it up, these exquisite little imps, night and day, for we never slept—not we! the fun was too good for that!

There were only two of these creatures that did not seem to enjoy themselves, and they were so odd, such droll, tearful, melancholy things, that somehow their faces always made us stop laughing, though we could not suppress a giggle now and then at their solemn and sentimental way of doing things.

One was a queer little sprite, that looked so exquisitely droll with that tiny hat set upon his powdered hair, and the face underneath so comically anxious, that it quite broke my heart to look at the little fellow standing there with the tears in his eyes.

I remember puzzling myself a long time regarding the materials which composed his vest and small clothes, and of satisfying myself that they must have been made from the leaves of a tiger lily, peony, or some other great crimson blossom. The grave, drab coat, with its red facings, the golden buckles and hat, defied my imagination altogether; but the face, that anxious face, was dear old Turner's, withered up to the size of

a crab-apple. It seemed so sad, so mournful, I quite pitied him, but somehow couldn't keep from laughing at the priggish little figure he cut. Then there was a funny little woman, just the least bit shorter, in a blue dress and large cap, held up by the queerest high-backed comb that spread out the crown like a fan. Her face was older and darker than the rest, a Spanish face, with something kind in it that sometimes kept me quiet minutes together. These two figures really saddened us—the rosy troop of sprites and myself—with their grave faces and muttered consultations with each other, as if life and death depended on what they were talking about.

Then the scene would change. These elfin revellers disappeared. Flashes of lightning and clouds of cold white snow came slowly over me, drifting, drifting, drifting; and in their midst that beautiful face, so icy, so white, with its great, mournful eyes looking down into mine, hour after hour—it haunted me then, it has haunted me ever since. Yet no fear ever came upon me; no superstitious dread crept through my frame; but a chillness, as if mountain snow were around me, nothing more.

At last this strange phantasmagoria cleared away; the elves gave up their gambols and disappeared, all but the old man and the woman. They gradually grew larger, and I knew that they were the good Spanish woman and Turner.

How tenderly these two persons nursed me during the slow convalescence that followed! How ardent was the love I gave back for this care, for mine was an impassioned nature! Every sensation that I knew, love, hate, grief, fear—nay, not fear, I think that was unknown to my nature from the first!—but all other sensations were passions in me. Generous sentiments predominated with me always. I say this when my life lies before me like a map, and every impulse of my soul has been analyzed with impartiality, and knowledge more searching than any man or woman ever gathered from the actions of his fellow man.

I saw Turner at stated periods, when he could escape from

Greenhurst to inquire after my comforts, and caress me in his quaint, tender fashion. I had learned to watch for the hour of his coming with the most ardent impatience. He always brought me some pretty gift, if it were only a branch of hawthorn in flower, an early crocus, or a hatful of violets. He was an old, kind-hearted bachelor, and the poor child who had crept to his feet from the way-side, became the very pet and darling of a heart that had but one other idol on earth, and that was Lord Clare, his master.

Maria and I were alone in the house. The language in which she addressed me was not that which I spoke with Turner, but her caresses, her eager love were even more demonstrative than his. There was a pathos and power in her expressions of tenderness that he doubtless felt, but could not manifest in his own rougher language. She carried me in her arms while I was unable to walk, and sat by me as I played wearily with the rich toys, of which she found an endless variety in the closets and hidden places about the cottage.

I spoke her language well and without effort, for it seemed more native to my tongue than the English; and sometimes I would address Turner in some of its rich terms of endearment, but he always checked me with a grimace, as if the sound were hateful.

There was another language, too, of which I had learned the sounds, but whether it was of human origin, or something that I had gathered from the wild birds, I could not tell. It had a meaning to me, but no one else understood it, and so, like the feelings to which this strange gift alone gave utterance, it was locked up in my heart to be hoarded and pondered over in secret.

CHAPTER XXV.

MYSELF AND MY SHADOW.

I do not know how Turner managed to establish me in this luxurious home, but Lord Clare had left him with power to act, and I suppose he exercised it in my behalf, without consulting Lady Catherine. In fact, the cottage had for years been considered as his residence.

I grew stronger and more contented as time went on. The stillness, the bright atmosphere, and the love with which I was surrounded, hushed my soul back into childhood again, for up to this time I can remember but few thoughts or sensations that partook of my infant years.

In truth, there was something fairy-like in my position, well calculated to excite an imagination vivid as mine to most unhealthy action. Sometimes it seemed to me as if I had been a child of the air, for my first memory went back to the lark's nest in the meadow; and my earliest idea of enjoyment was rich with bird music. Good as Turner and Maria were, it never entered my mind to consider myself as absolutely belonging to them, more subtle and refined affinities existed within me.

Everything that surrounded me was calculated to excite these feelings. The utmost prodigality of wealth could have supplied nothing of the beautiful or refined which was not mysteriously bestowed on me. The clothes I wore, my toys and books were of the most exquisite richness. The texture of everything I touched was of peculiar delicacy; thus a natural worship of the beautiful, inherent in my nature, was fed and pampered as if by magic. The house contained a library of richly bound books, in many languages, mostly classical, or on subjects of foreign interest. Few romances were among the collection, but the poets of all countries were well represented. The best poetry

of Italy, Germany and Spain, the ancient classics, and mythological subjects predominated. Many of these volumes were in the original language, but there was no lack of English translations. The most remarkable thing about this collection was an entire deficiency in the works of native authors. A few of the poets were to be found, Milton and two or three others, but everything calculated to give an insight into the social life or history of England, seemed to have been excluded with vigilance.

The small hexagonal room which contained these books was connected with my sleeping-chamber by a small gallery lined with pictures. Two or three statuettes, copies from the great masters, occupied pedestals in this gallery, and the lights were so arranged that every inspiration of the genius that had given life to the canvas or the marble, was thrown forward as by a kindred mind. This room and its gallery, unlike most of the other apartments, were left unlocked, and, with my imagination on fire with the legends in which Maria was constantly indulging, I loved to wander along the gallery, and ponder over the pictures, filling each landscape with some scene of active life, and reading a destiny in the strange faces that looked down upon me from the wall.

But more especially did the statuettes become objects of admiration, probably because they touched some latent talent of my own, and awoke a desire of emulation. Even at this early period of my life, I felt an appreciation of the beauty in form and proportion so exquisitely maintained in these objects, keen as the desire of a hungry person for food. An awkward position, an ill arranged article of furniture, cross lights upon a picture, anything which outraged that exquisite sense of the perfect, which has been both my happiness and my bane, was as vivid with me before I knew a rule of art as it is now.

So with this inherent sense of the beautiful guiding me like a sunbeam, I made play-fellows of the breathing marble and of pictures so rare, as I have since learned, that a monarch might have coveted them. I grew ambitious to emulate the marble in my own person, and amused myself, hour after hour, in prac-

tising the graceful position which each maintained on its pedestal. This grew tiresome at length, and impelled by the genius within me, I began to invent and arrange new combinations for myself, before the large mirror that reflected back the gallery and all it contained, when my chamber door was open.

Was I struck by the vision of childish beauty that broke upon me from the mirror during these efforts? Yes! as I was pleased with the paintings upon the wall, or the statues that gleamed in their chaste beauty around me. I loved the wild, little creature that stood mocking my gestures in the mirror, because she was more brilliant than the paintings, and more life-like than the marble—because her arch eyes were so full of the life that glowed in my own bosom. Ah, yes, I loved the child. Why not? She alone seemed my equal. I did not reflect that she was the shadow of myself, or in truth identify her with my own existence at all. She seemed to me like a new picture going through another progression toward life. They were so changeless; but she was variable as a humming-bird. She smiled, moved, looked a thousand things from those great flashing eyes. Oh, if she could have spoken, I was sure in my heart that she might have uttered that strange, hidden language of mine.

So I met the wild, little beauty each day in the mirror. Every graceful curve and line of the statues had become familiar, and almost wearisome to me, but here was infinite variety changing at my will. She was my slave, my subject, a being over whom I had absolute control; and this was the first idea that I ever had of companionship.

In the library I found some books still done up in brown paper packages, as if ordered for some purpose and forgotten. These, of course, became objects of especial curiosity to a child always on the alert for discoveries. They were juvenile volumes, richly illustrated, containing all the fairy tales, I do believe, ever invented or translated into the English language.

I seized upon these books with eagerness, studied the pictures, and made toilsome efforts to spell out their meaning. So be-

tween Maria's reading, and my own spelling out of words, we gathered up all the glowing romance ; and this opened new visions to me, and gave a vivid impulse to my day dreamings among the pictures. It was only my wild spirit that wandered. At first the debility that followed my illness, and afterward Turner's earnest prohibition, confined me to the house, or, as a great indulgence, to the little flower nook directly under the windows.

A winter and spring went by, and then my fairy-like imprisonment ceased. Old Turner grew cheerful and indulgent ; he gave me long walks among the trees ; he brought a pretty black pony upon which I rode, while he walked by my saddle.

My frame grew vigorous, and my spirits bird-like, under this wholesome indulgence. Sometimes I caught glimpses of Greenhurst, and a vivid remembrance of the morning Turner had found me upon its door-steps, came back upon my brain. I wondered if the lady, with her dog, and that long, silver-grey morning-robe, was there yet, and if I should ever see her again. As my courage and curiosity grew strong, I inquired about these things of Turner. "No, the lady was not there," he said, "she had gone up to London, to be near her son, who was at Eton."

Where was London ? Who was her son ? What was Eton ?

How eagerly I crowded all these questions together, when, for the first time, I found the dear old man disposed to indulge my curiosity. London, Eton were soon explained, but they still seemed like the cities I had read of in my fairy books. But when he told me of this son, that he was Lord Clare's nephew, and might one day become owner of Greenhurst, our own pretty home, and the broad fields and parks around us to the horizon almost, my heart fell, my thoughts grew dark, and for a moment the beautiful landscape disappeared. A cold mist surrounded me. It was but for a moment, but why was it ? How came this bleak vision to encompass me thus with its dreary indistinctness ? Had some name jarred on my memory which

refused to receive it, and yet felt the shock? Was that name Lord Clare's? Why had neither Turner nor Maria ever mentioned him before? Who was he? What was Turner to him?

I asked these questions at once. Turner answered in a low voice, and I fancied with reluctance. Certain I am, his voice was more husky than usual.

He explained that Lord Clare was his master—that he had gone into foreign lands, and might not come back for years. The lady whom I had seen was his sister, unlike him in everything, but still his sister; and during his absence her home was to be at Greenhurst whenever it might be her pleasure to reside there.

We had ridden to the brow of an eminence on the verge of the park while Turner was giving me this intelligence. The spot commanded a fine view of the country far and near. In a sweeping curve of the distant uplands stood a dark stone dwelling, partially castellated and partaking of a style which admits of towers and balconies, so ornamented that it was impossible to guess to what age they belonged. It was an imposing building, and made both a grand and picturesque object, lapped as it was among the most verdant and lovely hills in the world. I looked toward this building with interest. It seemed like something I had seen before, pictured perhaps in a book.

"And that," said I, pointing toward the distance, "that house yonder among the purple hills, is that Lord Clare's also?"

"That," said Turner, with a sigh, and shading his eyes with his withered hand, "that is Marston Court."

He paused, shook his head mournfully, and then, remembering that the name was not a full answer to my question, continued,

"Yes, yes, that is Lord Clare's also. It came to him through—through his—his—through Lady Clare."

"And who lives yonder, dear Turner?"

"No one; it is shut up."

"I think," said I, leaning down toward the old man, who stood with one arm thrown over the neck of my pony, "I think this world must have very few people in it for all that you tell

me. No one at Greenhurst—no one out yonder—only you and Maria and me among these woods and fields.”

“And is not that enough, child?”

I shook my head.

“Are you not happy with us, Zana? What more do you want?”

“I want,” said I, kindling with the idea, “I want to see a child; you tell me the world is full of little girls and boys like me—where are they?”

“I have thought of this before,” muttered Turner, uneasily, “it’s natural—it’s what I should have expected. What company are the Spanish woman and such a dry old chip as I am for a creature like this?”

His look of annoyance disturbed me. I could not bear to see his old face so wrinkled with anxiety.

“We should have to take a long journey to find the children, I suppose,” said I, hoping to relieve his perplexity; “but Jupiter here is so strong, and so swift, if you could but keep up with him now, we might search for them, you know.”

The old man still looked anxious, and bore down heavily on the neck of my beautiful steed with his arm.

“Don’t,” said I, “you will hurt Jupiter; see how his head droops.”

“Poor thing, I would not hurt him for the world, if it were only for her sake,” said the old man, smoothing the arched neck of Jupiter with his palm; “next to you, Zana, I think she loved this pretty animal.”

“Who—who was it that loved Jupiter so?” I inquired, with eager curiosity.

“Your mother,” replied the old man, and the words dropped like tears from his lips.

“My mother,” I repeated, looking upward, and solemnly expecting to see that sweet face gazing down upon me from the clouds. “Let us go home, dear Turner, I am growing cold; do not say that again, the sound drifts over me here like a snow-heap, it hurts me.”

Turner seemed to struggle with himself. Then lifting his eyes to my face, as if he had nerved his resolution to say something very painful, he answered,

"One minute, Zana! Tell me, child, what is it that makes you turn white and shiver so, when I speak as I did now of your mother?"

"I do not know!" I replied, looking upward, with anxiety. "The cold is here at my heart, I do not know why."

"Do you remember your mother? Now that you are well, something of the past should come back to you. Child, make an effort—that mother—what has become of her?"

I only shuddered—but had no reply to give; I could feel, but all was blank and blackness to my thoughts.

Turner saw my distress, and his own become more and more visible. He looked upon the ground and began muttering to himself, a habit that he had when very much perplexed. His thoughts reached me in disjointed snatches, but I dwelt upon them long after.

"How can I send him word? What can I say? Even proof of her own identity is wanting—proof that would satisfy him. Besides, his anxiety was for her—poor thing—even more than the child. If she could but be made to remember. Zana, Zana!" he burst forth, grasping my arm, and looking imploringly into my face, "struggle with this apathy of mind—strive, think—tell me, child, tell me something that I can get for a clue! Tell me if you can—try, try, my pretty Zana, and you shall have troops of children to play with. Tell me, where was it that you parted with your mother?"

I did make an effort to remember. My veins chilled; my cheeks grew cold as ice; I lifted my finger upward and pointed to a bank of clouds rolling in fleecy whiteness over us.

"Is that all?" exclaimed Turner, despairingly.

I could not speak, my lips seemed frozen. I sat like a marble child upon the back of my pony; everything around me had turned to snow once more.

Tears rolled down Turner's cheeks, great, cold tears, that looked like hail-stones—they made me shiver afresh.

It was the last time that Turner ever tortured me with questions regarding my mother—questions that I had no power to answer, yet which brought with them such mysterious, such indescribable pain. Later, when my soul was called back from the past—but of this hereafter.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE FAIRY AT THE POOL.

ONE day I had wandered through the garden and out among the brave old chestnuts quite alone, for now that the family were absent, Turner allowed me to wander almost at will anywhere between the old mansion and our more humble, but not less lovely home.

This time I took one of the great chestnut avenues hitherto unexplored, which led me, by a curving sweep, to the lodge, which I just remembered having passed in my progress from the meadows, on the memorable night when Turner found me upon the door-steps. Then it had seemed like a cliff, adown which great festoons of ivy were sweeping to the ground. Now I saw the thick foliage turned and forced back here and there, to admit light into the doors and windows of a rustic cottage, which had a stir of life within, though I saw no person.

I passed this lodge with a stealthy tread, for a sense of disobedience troubled me. I knew, without having been directly told, that both Turner and Maria would disapprove my passing beyond the limits of the park ; but childish curiosity, with some vague remembrance of the place, were too strong for my sense

of right, and I passed on quite charmed with the broad slope of meadow land that lay before me, all golden, crimson and white with mid-summer blossoms. A village with a church tower in the distance rose upon my view like a glimpse of fairy-land. I felt then that the world, as Turner asserted, was full of people, and longed to know more about them.

I walked along the carriage track which wound toward the village through thick hedges just out of blossom, holding my breath as I recognized here a moss-covered stone, there a hillock, upon which I had set down to rest on that wearisome night. The grass was green and fresh where the tent had been, to which my first remembrance went back, but I recollected the place well. As I stood gazing on it, the soft gurgle of waters fell upon my ear as it had then, and induced, half by a feeling that seemed like terror, half by curiosity, I moved toward the hollow, wondering if I should find that impish little figure waiting for me again.

I reached the slope, looked half timidly down, and remained breathless and lost in delight.

Upon the rock which I have mentioned covered with lichen and mossy grasses, sat a little girl, about my own age, I should think, busy with a quantity of meadow blossoms that filled the crown of a straw bonnet that stood by her side. All around her lay the gathered blossoms ; her tiny feet were buried in them ; they gleamed through the skirt of her muslin dress, and brightened the rock all around. She coquetted with them like a bird—bending her head on one side as she held a cluster of violets in the sun, flinging it back with a graceful curve of the neck, when they dropped into shadow, and eyeing them coyly all the time, as a robin regards the cherry he intends to appropriate at leisure.

What eyes the creature had ! large and of a purplish blue, like the violets she held, and so full of smiling brightness. Never before or since have I seen a creature so beautiful, so full of graceful bloom. Her profuse hair was in disorder, falling in golden waves and curls all over her white shoulders, from

which the transparent sleeve was drawn with knots of blue ribbon, leaving the prettiest dimples in the world exposed. Her mouth was soft, red, and smiling like ripe cherries in the sunshine, and that rosy smile, so innocent in its tenderness, so radiant with glee ! Talk of women not feeling the glow of each other's beauty ; why, there is no feeling on earth so unselfish, so full of lofty, tender admiration as the love which one high-souled woman feels for the sister woman to whom her soul goes forth in sympathy. This appreciation, these attachments are not frequent in society, but when they do exist, the loves of the angels are almost realized. Sometimes the same feeling extends to children, but not often.

I looked down upon this child, thus busy with her graceful flowers, and my heart filled with the sunshine of her presence. As she trifled with her garlands, the smile broke into music on her red lips, and a few soft chirping notes, wild and untaught as a bird's, blended richly with the flowing waters.

At last she lifted a half-twined garland high over her head, that the sunshine might kindle up its blossoms, and as her eyes were turned upward they fell upon me. The garland hung motionless in her hand ; the song died on her lips, leaving them like an opening rose-bud ; and her blue eyes filled with a look of pleasant wonder. Thus, for the moment, we gazed upon each other, we who were to be a destiny each to the other.

"Come," she said at last, pushing her straw hat toward me so eagerly that a quantity of flowers rolled over the brim, through which the broad strings rippled in azure waves—"come, there is enough for us both, let us pelt the brook and hear the water laugh as it runs away with them. Here, jump to the rock, I will make room. Now for it !"

She gathered up her skirt, crushing the blossoms with her little dimpled arms, pushed back the bonnet, and left a space upon the stone for me to occupy.

I sprang down the bank breathing quickly, and with my whole frame in a joyful glow, I placed myself among the

blossoms, wove my arms about the charming infant's, and kissed her shoulders till she laughed aloud, as a bird breaks into music at the first sight of a kindred songster.

"Come," said the child, her voice still rich with glee—"come, let us go to work ; which will you have, violets, primroses, or some of these pretty white stars that I found by the brook?"

"All, all," I answered, with animation, "give them to me, and mind what a pretty crown I shall make for your hair."

She turned her great wondering eyes on me as I wove the blossoms together—the violets with golden primroses, intermingling them with leaves and spears of long grass, a white star gleaming out here and there in silvery relief.

When she saw my garland, so different from her own, in which the flowers were grouped without method, the child seemed lost in admiration. After gazing on it a moment, and then upon me, she took her own half-formed wreath and cast it upon the brooklet with a charming little pout of the lips, that was lovely almost as her smiles had been.

I went on with my coronal, enjoying the task as an author does his poem, or a painter his picture. The buds harmonized under my fingers ; their symmetrical grace filled my soul with the delight which springs from a natural love of the beautiful. Even at that age I had all the feelings of an artist, all that love of praise which holds a place in those feelings.

"Ah," said I, weaving my wreath among her golden curls, "if you could see how beautiful you are together, you and the flowers."

"I can see," cried the child, springing up and scattering a shower of blossoms from the folds of her frock which fell into the water, disturbing it till it looked like a shattered mirror. "No, not now, naughty thing that I am, to make the poor brook so angry with my flowers—but wait a minute, and you shall see !"

"No, no, not there !" cried I, seizing her in breathless fear, for I remembered the hideous thing that had frightened me

from the depths of those very waters ; “ don’t look in the water ; let us go away. It may be lurking here yet.”

“ What ? ” questioned the child, anxiously.

“ Something that I saw here once, a wild, wicked creature, with such eyes and hair ”——

“ What, in the water ? ” she asked, her blue eyes growing wider and larger.

“ Yes, here in the pool, just by this rock.”

We both stood up clinging to one another. In our upright position the pool lay clear and tranquil beneath us, and impelled by that sort of fascination which in moments of affright often turns the gaze upon that which it dreads to see, our eyes fell at the same moment upon two objects reflected back as from a mirror—my little friend, so like one of those cherubs which Raphael half buries amid the transparent clouds in his pictures—and that other little friend, with whom I had become acquainted in the mirror at home.

“ Ah, how came she here ? Is she your friend also ? ” I said, pointing toward the dark brilliant child that pointed back to me, with a questioning smile as I spoke.

“ Who, that ? ” asked my companion, waving her hand—a gesture that was sent back, as it seemed, with new grace from the water.

“ Why, don’t you know it again ? ”

“ Yes, but do you ? Does it ever speak to you, or only stand looking like that ? ”

She gazed at me with her wondering eyes, and then at the images beneath us.

“ Why, don’t you know me, there with the wreath on ?—and you ? it is so droll that any one should not know herself.”

I caught my breath.

“ What ? ” I exclaimed, “ does that child look like me ? is it me ? ”

“ Why, yes, who else, please ? ” cried my companion gaily, “ see, it is your hair, so black, and your pretty frock too ; and the eyes, they look like stars in the water.”

I looked upon the two figures, the fair, blooming little beauty—the dark, earnest, haughty but sparkling face that bent over her. After a moment, I said slowly, as if speaking of a picture, “yes, it is me, and I am beautiful!”

“Indeed you are,” exclaimed the child, with a gaiety that disturbed me, for this conviction of my own loveliness gave a serious, almost sad impression to my thoughts; “papa calls me his blossom, you shall be his star. Shall she not, my own darling papa?”

I looked up and saw a gentleman standing upon the bank looking calmly, and with a gentle smile upon us as we stood. He was dressed in black, somewhat worn, and had a subdued meekness in his deportment, which won my childish heart in an instant.

“Well, Cora, are you ready to return home?” he said, with a quiet smile.

“Oh, yes, papa,” she cried, unwinding her arms from mine, and leaping from the rock. “Good-bye, come to-morrow,” she cried, clambering up the bank, and pausing at the top to shower back kisses with both hands; “do you hear? Come to-morrow, my star”——

The gentleman took her hand and led her away. I watched them till they disappeared, and then sunk upon the rock crying disconsolately. It seemed as if my life had again just begun, and was swept away into darkness.

CHAPTER XXVII.

FUNERALS AND ORPHANS.

ALL that night I lay awake, thinking of the morrow, longing for daylight, and so impatient of the darkness around me, that I left my bed again and again to fling aside the curtains and search for a glow in the east. I had told my adventure, and described the beautiful child to Maria, my kind *bonne*. She heard it all with pleasant curiosity, but strove to subdue the wild impatience with which I panted for another interview with this heavenly creature of my own sex and age.

The next day I started for the spring, and reached it in a glow of expectation, panting with the eager affection that burned like a fire in my bosom. Nothing was there. The grey rock, with its trampled lichen, the pool sleeping softly beneath it, and the sweet current rippling through clusters of fragrant mint, alone met my ear and gaze. A few dead blossoms lay upon the rock, tormenting me with a withered memento of the joy I had known the day before. I sat down among these blossoms and cried with bitter disappointment. After waiting hours in the hot sun, I returned home weary and disheartened. Why had she broken her promise? How could I ever trust her again if she did come to the spring? Who was she, a real being, or a fairy, who, for one moment had taken pity on my loneliness, to leave me more desolate than before?

My hopes of seeing her again began to falter greatly after the third day, but still I persisted on going to the rock every morning for a week. The dead flowers among the lichen went to my heart every time I saw them, but I had no courage to brush them into the water; they were, at least, a proof that I had seen her.

One morning, after brooding over my disappointment, wondering and watching as a child, with a heart in its wish, only can wait and watch, I shook away the tears from my eyes and sprang up, nerved with a sort of inspiration. I would search for the child—wander right and left till she was found. I would mourn no more, but go to work, nor yield again to tears while an effort could be made to find her for whose presence I pined.

I clambered up the bank, crossed into the highroad, and wandered on toward the village that lay in lovely quietude before me, half veiled in a silvery mist. This village was the world to me, and an eager wish to see what it was like, mingled with a conviction that there I should find the child.

I drew near the village, looking eagerly on each side for the object of my wanderings. The church which, afar off, seemed in the very heart of the place, stood some distance from the large cluster of houses, and I reached this first. It was one of those low stone buildings so common in England, with deep gothic windows, and a single tower draped and overrun with ivy. Behind it was a grave-yard, crowded thick with yew and cypress trees, under whose shadows the curious old grave-stones gleamed dimly, as if through the mournful mistiness of a funeral veil.

Near this church, and like it, built of grey stone, to which the ivy clung like a garment, stood a dwelling. White jessamines and creeping roses brightened up the ivy, garlanding the very eaves with blossoms; and a porch which was one mass of honeysuckles, was approached by a narrow gravel path bordered with flowers, and sheltered the front door.

The contrast of life and death was strong between this dwelling and the grave-yard. One was bright with foliage and gay with blossoms, around which the golden bees kept up a constant hum, and birds flitted in and out, too busy for singing, but blending their low, pleasant chirps with the sleepy bee music. The sunshine fell softly on bee, bird, and blossom—the dew here and there fringed the ivy leaves with diamonds,

and one high elm tree sweeping over all. Opposed to this was the graveyard, lying within the shadow of the church—the yews and cypress crowding together among the graves like giant mourners at a funeral, and tall trees looming above, laden down and black with rooks' nests, around which the sable birds wheeled and circled in gloomy silence, broken only by an abrupt caw, now and then, which fell upon your ear like a cry of pain from one of the graves. Thus it was that these two buildings, the church and parsonage house, struck me at the time. It is strange—I have no idea what possessed me—but I turned from the cheerful dwelling and entered the grave-yard.

The long grass was heavy with dew, and my tiny boots were soon wet to the ankles; but I wandered on among the ancient stones, wondering what they were, and why the joy had all left my heart so suddenly. I bent down and attempted to read the inscriptions on these stones; but most of the letters were choked up with moss, and of the rest I could make nothing. The great mystery of death had never been made known to me, and this was the first time I had ever seen a grave.

I sat down on a horizontal stone of white marble, cut with deep, black letters, and folding my hands on my lap, looked around saddened to the heart, and in this new impression forgetting the child I had come forth to seek. All at once, a strain of music swept over me from the church, slow, sad, and with a depth of solemnity that made every string in my heart vibrate. As if a choir of angels had summoned me, I arose and walked slowly toward the church. The door was open, and through it swept the music in deep, thrilling gushes, that seemed to bathe me in a solemn torrent of sound.

In the dim light which filled the church I saw a group of persons. Some had handkerchiefs to their eyes, and others bent forward as if in prayer.

Directly in front of what I afterwards learned to be the altar, stood an object that filled me with inexpressible awe. A quantity of black velvet fell over it in deep, gloomy folds, and

those nearest it wept bitterly, and with heavy sobs that made my heart swell.

At last the music was hushed. A man stepped down from the altar in long, sweeping robes, whose heavy blackness was relieved by a wave of white, sweeping over one shoulder and across his bosom. Some one lifted the mass of velvet, and I saw the flash of silver nails with the gleam of white satin as a lid was flung back.

Then all faded from my sight. I saw nothing but a tall man, also in robes that swept the floor, holding a child by the hand.

I uttered a low cry and moved forward. It was the child I had seen at the spring, but oh, how changed ! Her lovely face was bathed in tears; that poor little mouth quivered with the sobs that she was striving to keep back. One dimpled hand was pressed to her eyes and dripping with tears—the blue ribbons, the pretty white frock, all were laid away; and, in their place, I saw the black sleeve of her mourning dress looped from the white shoulders with knots of crape.

I could not understand the meaning of all this, but my heart was full of her grief. Intent on her alone, I walked up the aisle, and, flinging my arms around her, began to weep aloud.

The child felt my embrace, gave me a wild look through her tears, and, seeing who it was, forced away the hand her father clasped, and flung herself upon my bosom.

I was about to speak.

“Hush, hush !” whispered the child, in a voice that reminded me of the waters stealing through the violet hollow, it was so liquid with tears, “see !”

Cora drew me closer to the object buried beneath those folds of velvet, and I saw, lying upon a satin pillow fast asleep, as I thought, the sweetest and palest face my young eyes had ever beheld. Waves of soft, golden hair lay upon the temples, and gleamed through the cold transparency of her cap ; the waxen hands lay folded over her still heart, pressing down a white rose into the motionless plaits of fine linen that lay upon her bosom.

"Has she been long asleep?" I whispered.

"She is dead!" replied the child, with a fresh burst of tears.

Dead—dead! How the word fell upon my heart, uttered thus, with tears and shuddering, its meaning visible before me in that marble stillness. My very ignorance gave it force and poignancy. Its mysteriousness was terrible. I had no power to question further, but clung to the child no longer weeping, but hushed with awe.

It must have had a singular effect, my scarlet dress and rose colored bonnet, glowing like fire among the funeral vestments around me. But no one attempted to separate me from the child; and when the coffin was lifted, and the music once more swelled through the sacred edifice, we went forth clinging to each other. Though one of her hands was clasped in that of her father, I felt quite sure he was unconscious of my presence, for as they closed the coffin I could feel the shudder that ran through his frame, even though I touched the child only. He walked from the church like a blind man, capable of observing nothing but the black cloud that passed on before, sweeping his heart away with it.

We entered the church-yard, and there, beneath one of the tall trees, was a newly dug grave. I had seen it before, but it had no significance then; now my heart stood still as we gathered around it.

The trembling that had shaken the child's frame ceased. We both stood breathless and still as marble while the service was read; but when they lowered the coffin into the grave, I felt the pang that shot through her in every nerve of my own frame. She uttered no sound, but my arm was chilled by the coldness that crept over her neck and shoulders. I do not know how the crowd left us, but we stood alone by the grave with its fresh disjointed sods, and the brown earth gleaming desolately through the crevices.

All efforts at self-restraint gave way now that the widower found himself alone, for in our grief children are looked upon

like flowers. Their sympathy is like a perfume ; their innocence soothes the anguish they witness. Their little souls are brimful of beautiful charity, and their presence a foretaste of the heaven to which the Saviour likens them.

He stood in his silent grief, every nerve relaxed, every breath a sigh ; his figure drooped, and the child's hand fell loosely from his clasp. He leaned against the tree that was to overshadow the beloved one forever, and gazed down upon the grave as if his own soul were buried among the sods, and he were waiting patiently for the angels to come and help him search for it.

I felt that Cora was growing colder and colder. Her face was white as newly fallen snow. She ceased to weep, and allowed me to lead her away to the marble slab I had occupied when the funereal music led me to her.

We sat down together, and she leaned against my shoulder in profound silence. Her eyelids closed languidly, and the violet of her eyes tinged their whiteness like a shadow. For some minutes we sat thus, when a hoarse caw from the rooks circling above the tree, at whose foot lay the grave, made her start. She gave a single glance toward the tree, saw her father and the green sods, and, bursting into a fresh agony of tears, cried out,

"She is there—she is there—mother, mother—I have no mother !"

This cry awoke a strange pang in my bosom. For the first time there was entire sisterhood in our grief. Mother, mother, that was the thing for which I had pined, that was my own great want—I had felt it in the meadow when the lark fed its young—I had felt it in my convalescence—in the picture gallery—everywhere, and now this harassing want was hers also. As she cried aloud for her mother, so did my soul echo it ; and, as if her own lips had uttered the sound, I wailed forth,

"Mother, mother—I have no mother !"

With that we flung our arms around each other, as flowers sometimes twine their stems in the dark, and were silent again.

But this intense excitement could not last with children so impulsive and so ardent. After a while Cora began to be impatient of her father's immovability ; it frightened her.

"Let us go to him," she whispered ; "he seems dropping to sleep as she did. How white and still his hands look, falling so loosely against the black robe."

We crept toward the stricken man, and stood beside him in breathless awe. He did not observe us ; his eyes riveted themselves upon the sods ; the drooping of his limbs increased. He seemed about to seat himself on the earth.

Cora took his nerveless hand between hers, and raised her great blue eyes, now full of a light more touching than tears, to his face.

"Papa, papa, come home ; you told me that she would never wake up again."

He turned his heavy eyes upon the child with a look of questioning weariness, as if he had not comprehended her, and remained gazing in her face, with a mournful smile parting his lips.

"Come !" said the child, pulling gently at his hand—"come !"

He yielded to her infant force as if he were himself a child to be thus guided, and walked with a feeble step toward the house. But its cheerfulness mocked him. Bees that had been gathering stores from the honeysuckle porch—birds lodged in the great elm, and a thousand summer insects that love the sunshine, all set up a clamor of melody that made him shrink as if some violence had been offered. He said nothing, but I could see the color fade like mist from his lips. We had brought him too suddenly from the shadows of the grave ; the soul requires time before it can leave the vale of tears to stand uncovered in the sunshine. We entered a little parlor, very simple in its adornments, but neat and cheerful as a room could be. The casements were draped with foliage, and this gave a soft twilight to the apartment, that soothed us all.

He sat down in a large, easy-chair, draped with white

dimity, that gave a strong contrast to his black robe. Cora climbed to his knee, and put up her quivering lips for a kiss ; but he did not heed the action, and I saw her pretty eyes fill with tears—she, poor thing, who had shed so many that day.

I could not bear that look of sorrow, and pressed close up to his other knee.

“Sir, papa,” for she had called him this ; and why should not any other child ? “Papa, Cora wants to kiss you ; she has been trying and trying, but you don’t mind in the least.”

He looked at me with a bewildered stare, glancing down from my face to the brilliant garments that contrasted like flame against his black robe.

“It is Cora, poor little Cora, you should speak to—not me,” I said. “Look, her eyes are full again, and she has cried herself almost to death before.”

He looked at the child. The hard gloom melted from his eyes, and drawing her to his bosom he dissolved into tears.

I took his hand and kissed it. I pressed my lips down on the child’s feet, and smoothed her mourning frock with my hands. Tears were flashing like hail-stones down my own cheeks, and yet there was joy in my heart. Though a child, I knew that the worst part of his grief had passed away. Poor little Cora, how she clung and wept, and nestled in his bosom ! His strange coldness had seemed like a second death to the child. I felt that both were happier, and looked on with a glow of the heart.

“My child—my poor, poor orphan,” he murmured, kissing her forehead, while one little pale cheek was pressed to his bosom—“my orphan, my orphan”——

“What is an orphan, papa ?” questioned the child, lifting up her face, and gazing at him through her tears. “What is an orphan ?”

“It is a child who has no mother, Cora,” was the low and mournful reply.

My heart listened, and I felt to its innermost fold that there was a mysterious sisterhood between the child and myself.

Cora had withdrawn from her father's bosom, and sat upright on his knee listening to him. There was a moment's silence, and then, for the first time, he seemed perfectly conscious of my presence.

"And who is this?" he inquired, laying his hand on my head with mournful kindness.

"I am an orphan like her," was my answer.

"Poor child!" he murmured, gently smoothing my hair again. "But how came you here? You have been crying too—what has grieved you?"

"They were crying, all except you," I answered. "I was looking for her, down at the brook spring; something told me to walk on—on—on till I came here. I saw Cora and that beautiful lady on the satin pillow, with all the black velvet lying so heavily over her. Cora was very unhappy; so was I; that is all."

"But who are you? What is your name?" he asked, looking tenderly in my face.

"Zana is my name?"

"Zana, what more? You have another name?"

"No—Zana, that is all."

"But who is your father?"

The question puzzled me; I did not know its meaning; no one had ever asked after my father before.

"My father!" I said, doubtfully.

"Yes, your father; is he living?"

"I don't know!"

"But his name, what was that?"

"I don't know!"

"Then you are indeed an orphan, poor thing."

"I have no mother; isn't that an orphan?"

"Truly it is, poor infant—but where do you live?"

"On the Rock, by the little spring pond; don't you remember, papa?" said Cora, beginning to brighten up.

"Yes, I remember," he replied, sinking back into the sorrowful gloom, from which my strange appearance had aroused him; "and this was the child then who made your pretty violet wreath?"

"Mamma smiled, don't you remember, when she saw me with it on, and said it was so lovely!" answered the child, with animation.

"She never looked on you, my poor darling, without a smile," answered the father, so sadly that my heart swelled once more.

He seemed to forget me again, and sat gazing wistfully on the floor. Cora, too, was exhausted by excess of weeping, and I saw that her beautiful eyelids were drooping like the over-ripe leaves of a white rose. With a feeling that it was kind and right, I stole from the room and made my way home. It was a long walk, and I reached the cottage in a terrible state of exhaustion. My kind-hearted *bonne* took me in her arms without annoying questions, and I sighed myself to sleep on her bosom.



CHAPTER XXVIII.

PLEASANT DAYS AND PLEASANT TEACHINGS.

THE next morning Turner called, and I told him my mournful adventure. He seemed greatly interested, and, after listening very attentively, sunk into a train of thought, still holding me on his knee. At last he addressed Maria,

"This may prove a good thing for the child," he said. "It is strange we never thought of it before. The curate's daughter is just the companion for Zana, and as they teach her at home it is possible—but we will think more of it."

Turner placed me on the floor as he spoke, and, taking Maria on one side, conversed with her for some time. Meanwhile I was eager to reach the parsonage once more—I felt that Cora would be expecting me—that I might even be wanted by the broken-hearted man, whose grief had filled my whole being with sympathy.

I ran up stairs, put on my bonnet and little black silk mantilla with its rich-garniture of lace, and pulling Turner by the coat, gave him and Maria a hasty good morning.

“Wait,” said the kind old fellow, seizing my hand—“wait a bit, and I will go with you. All that I dread,” he continued, turning to Maria, “is the questions that he will naturally ask.”

“Oh, but you can evade them,” answered Maria.

“Yes, by telling all that I absolutely know, nothing more nor less, and that every servant at Greenhurst can confirm; I must stick to simple facts, no conjectures nor convictions without proof; no man has a right to ask them.”

I had gathered a basket of fruit that morning before the dew was off, and buried the glowing treasure beneath a quantity of jessamine and daphna blossoms, for some intuition told me that pure white flowers were most fitted for the house of mourning. With this precious little basket on my arm, I waited impatiently for Turner to start, if he was indeed going with me. But there were hesitation and reluctance in his manner, though at last he yielded to my importunity, and we set out.

It was a pleasant walk, and my enjoyment of its beauty was perfect. I had an object, something to fix my heart upon; the dreamy portion of my life was over; I began to know myself as a thinking, acting being.

We entered the parsonage. Mr. Clarke was in the parlor, sitting in the easy-chair exactly as I had left him the day before, with his silk robe on—and his eyes, heavy with grief, were bent upon the floor. Emboldened by the affection which had sprung up in my heart for this lone man, I went up to him as his own child might have done, and kissed the hand which fell languidly by his side.

He did not lift his eyes, but resting his hand on my head, whispered softly,

“Bless thee—bless thee, my poor orphan.”

He evidently mistook me for his own child.

“It is not little Cora, only me,” I said—“me and Mr. Turner.”

He looked up, saw Turner standing near the door, shook his head sadly, and dropped into the old position.

I swept the white blossoms to one end of my basket and exposed the cherries underneath, red and glowing as if the sunshine that had ripened them were breaking back to the surface again.

“I picked them for you my ownself,” I said, holding up the basket—“for you and Cora.”

Poor man, his lips were white and parched ; it is probable he had not tasted food all the previous day ! With a patient, thoughtful smile he took a cluster of the cherries, and my heart rose as I saw how much the grateful fruit refreshed him.

“This is a strange little creature,” he said at last, addressing Turner. “She was with us yesterday ; it seemed as if God had sent one of his cherubs. Truly of such is the kingdom of heaven !”

Dear old Turner, how his face began to work.

“She is a good girl—a very good girl. We’ve done all we could to spoil her like two old fools, her *bonne* and I ; but somehow she’s too much for us ; as for the spoiling, it isn’t to be done.”

I saw Cora through an open door, and laying a double handful of the cherries on her father’s robe, ran toward her. She looked pale, poor thing, and her sweet eyes were dull and heavy. She was in a little room that opened to the parlor, and, still in her long linen night-gown, and with her golden curls breaking from a tiny muslin cap, lay upon the cushions of a chintz sofa ; for, it seems, she had refused to be taken entirely from her father, and he had spent his night in the easy-chair.

“Her head was aching terribly,” she said ; “she had been awake some time, but papa was so still that it frightened her.

She was afraid that he had gone to sleep like her mother, and never would wake up again."

The quick sympathies of girlhood soon rendered us both more cheerful. She began to smile when her father's voice reached us, and refreshed her sweet lips with my cherries, in childish forgetfulness of the sorrow that had rendered them so pale.

"I'm so glad you have come," she said, leaving the sofa; and gathering up her night-gown till both rosy little feet were exposed upon the matting, she ran to a side door and looked out, calling, "Sarah Blake—Sarah Blake!"

A servant girl, plump and hearty, with little grey eyes, and cheeks red as the cherries in my basket, answered the summons. She looked upon me with apparent curiosity and evident kindness, and taking Cora in her arms, said, "so this is the strange little lady."

"Isn't she nice?" whispered Cora. "Isn't she like a star?"

"Yes, she is a nice playmate; I'm glad you've found her, Miss Cora, only one would like to know just who she is."

I sat down on the matting, as the door closed after them, and taking up the white flowers, began to weave them into a crown. It was an irresistible habit, that of sorting and combining any flowers that came within my reach. I often did this unconsciously, and with a sort of affectionate carefulness, for the rude handling of a blossom gave me pain. It seemed to me impossible that they did not suffer as a child might; so, with a light touch, I wove my garland thick and heavy with leaves and blossoms. I never felt lonely when flowers were my companions. They seemed to me like a beautiful alphabet, which God had given, that I might fashion out with them the mystic language of my own heart.

The voices of Turner and the curate reached me from the next room. They were conversing in a low tone, but I could hear that the stricken man was shaking off the apathy of his grief. There was interest and depth in his tone. As they talked, the door, which had been but half on the latch, swung open a little, and I heard him say,

"It is a strange and touching history. Have you made any effort to learn how she came in this forlorn condition?"

"Every effort that a human being could make."

"And you have literally no information beyond the morning when you took her from the door-step?"

"None whatever."

"Cannot she herself remember enough to give some clue?"

"Illness must have driven everything from her memory. The mere effort to recollect seems to shake her very existence. I will never attempt it again."

"She *must* be of good birth," said the curate, thoughtfully, "never did human face give more beautiful evidence of gentle blood."

"I never doubted that," answered Turner, quickly.

"Strange, very strange," murmured the curate.

"Is there any hope that you will aid us, sir?" said Turner, who used few words at any time, and evidently found the prolonged deliberations of the curate annoying.

"How can you ask?" replied the curate, gently. "I thought that was settled long ago. Were she the poorest vagrant that ever craved alms, I would do my best to aid her. As it is, can I ever forget yesterday? Mr. Turner, we sometimes *do* find angels in our path. This one we shall not entertain unawares. I know that she will prove a blessing to this desolated house."

I dropped the flowers in my lap, and began to listen breathlessly. His beautiful faith in my future—his solemn trust in the good that was in me, fell like an inspiration upon my soul. From that hour my devotion to that good man and his daughter was a religious obligation—yes, a religious obligation before I knew what religion meant.

"Ah! if *she* had only been near to help us," said the curate, and his eyes filled with those quiet, dewy tears with which God first waters a grief-stricken heart before he lets in the sunshine to which it has become unused—tears and sunshine that sometimes freshen the soul again with more than the brightness of childhood.

A strange thought came over me. I laid down the wreath and glided softly to the curate's chair.

"They told us yesterday that she had gone to God," I whispered, looking in his face with a sort of holy courage. "Is God so far off that she cannot help us?"

The curate gazed at me with a strange expression at first, then a beautiful smile parted his lips, and laying both hands on my head, he looked in my face still smiling, while his eyes slowly filled.

That moment little Cora came in. Her father reached forth his hand and drew her arm around my neck.

"Little children, love one another," he said, and falling back in his chair, with the smile still upon his lips, he closed his eyes, but great tears forced themselves from under the lids and rolled slowly downward.

I drew back with the child, and with our arms interlinked we glided into the next room. I took up my crown of white blossoms, and, as if she read the thought in my bosom, Cora whispered, "Mamma, is it for her?" We stole through the parlor again, and went out. The curate sat with his eyes closed, and Turner had an elbow on each knee, with both hands supporting his forehead.

Without speaking a word, Cora and I turned an angle of the church and entered the grave-yard. It looked more cheerful than it had appeared the day before. Long glances of sunshine shot across it, and some stray birds had lost themselves in the cypress trees, and seemed trying to sing their way out.

We laid our garland down upon the bleak, new grave of Cora's mother, just over the spot where we knew her cold heart was sleeping. Its faint perfume spread like an angel's breath all over the grave, and we went softly away, feeling that she knew what we had done.

From that day my life was divided between the parsonage and the only home I had ever known. Turner had proved a more efficient consoler of the curate than a thousand sermons could have been. In the hour of his deepest grief, he had

opened a new channel for his affections "as new means of usefulness. The overpowering anguish, that had almost swept him from the earth in twenty-four hours, never returned again. He would often say, looking upon us children with a peaceful smile,

"She is with God, and He is everywhere."

None but a good man could have been so easily won from such a grief by the simple power to aid others, for his wife had been the most devoted and loving creature that the sun ever shone upon, and her death was sudden as the flash of lightning that darts from a summer cloud. A disease of the heart, insidious and unsuspected till the moment of her death, left her lifeless, in the morning, upon the pillow to which she had retired at night with trusting prayers and innocent smiles.

Thus I became the pupil of Mr. Clarke—the sister, nay, more than the sister of his child; and now, heart and mind, my whole nature began to expand. My profound ignorance of life was slowly enlightened. The history of my native land was no longer a sealed book. I began to comprehend the distinctions that existed in society—the principles of government, the glorious advantages which follow each step that nations take toward freedom. I confess it took me a long time to comprehend why one man should, without effort of his own, possess lands which stretched from horizon to horizon, like Lord Clare, while others, who toiled from sun to sun, could scarce secure the necessaries of existence; nor have I yet solved the question satisfactorily to my sense of right.

No life can be really monotonous in which taste is gratified and knowledge acquired; certainly not where the heart is allowed to put forth its natural affections and weave them around worthy objects.

Cora and I took our lessons together, but she had little of that eager thirst for knowledge which possessed me. Gentle, caressing and indolent, to escape her lessons was a relief, while I devoured mine, and found time for the gratification of a thousand fancies that she was ready to praise, but unwilling to share.

It is said that women of opposite natures are most likely to find sympathy with each other. I do not believe this, either in men or women. In order to perfect companionship, tastes, habits, intellectual aspirations, nay, even physical health must assimilate.)

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I believe no human being ever loved another more thoroughly than I loved Cora Clarke. To say that I would have given my life to save hers would be little, for life is not always the greatest sacrifice one human soul can make to another. But I would have yielded up any one of the great hopes of my existence, could the sacrifice have secured her happiness. But in less than three years I had outgrown Cora's companionship. My love, though unbounded, had a sense of protection in it. It was the caressing attachment of a mother for her child, or an elder sister for her orphan charge.

Strange as it may seem, the companionship so essential to my character was found more thoroughly in the father than the child. He never wearied of teaching, and I never remember to have become tired of learning. My appreciation of all his arguments—and they were vast—was perfect. My love for him was more than that of a daughter for her parent.

From the time I first entered his house, I felt a conviction that, in some way, the love that I bore for these two persons would be brought into powerful action—that I should be called upon to support them in great troubles, and that my own destiny was in some mystical way bound up in them. Thus time passed happily enough, till I reached my eleventh year. Lord Clare was still abroad in the far east, it was said, and I had begun to think of him as one dwells upon the characters in a history. The name had become familiar now, and I ceased to feel any extraordinary interest in it such as had first impressed me.

Certainly I knew something of his history. Mr. Clarke had told me of the sudden and singular death which had overtaken Lady Clare on the night of her marriage, and of the great probability that the earl would never marry again, in which

case his sister, and through her his nephew, the Etonian, would come in possession of the title and several large estates entailed with it.

One thing, I remember, interested me a good deal, for I was at the time informing myself regarding the hereditary privileges of the British nobility, and it was fixed upon my memory that this particular title, and its estates, descended alike to male or female heirs, as they happened to fall in succession, while a large property, acquired by Lord Clare's marriage, might be disposed of by deed or will.

CHAPTER XXIX.

MY STRANGE ACQUAINTANCE.

I STILL possessed Jupiter, my beautiful black pony, and frequently rode him to the parsonage, taking a canter over the park before returning home. Greenhurst remained unoccupied, except by a servant or two, and my freedom in this respect was unchecked, because Turner supposed it to be without danger of any kind.

One day—I think this was a month after I entered upon my twelfth year—I took a fine free gallop toward a portion of the park which has been mentioned as commanding a view of Marston Court.

I checked my pony on a ridge of upland, and was looking toward this house which, from the first, had contained a mysterious interest to me, when a man came suddenly from behind a clump of trees at my right, and walking up to Jupiter, threw his arm over the animal's neck.

I was not terrified, but this abrupt movement filled me with surprise, and, without speaking a word, I bent my gaze searchingly on his face and figure.

He was a man of middle age, spare and muscular, of swarthy complexion, and with eyes so black and burning in their glance, that mine sunk under them as if they had come in sudden contact with fire.

"What is your name?" he said, still keeping those fierce eyes on my face.

"Take your arm off Jupiter's neck," I answered, "he is not used to strangers."

He laughed, revealing a row of firm, white teeth, that gave a ferocious expression to his whole countenance.

"I am almost answered," he said, with a low chuckle, "the blood spoke out there!"

His language was broken, and his appearance strange. I was sure that he came from foreign parts, and looked at him with curiosity unmingled with fear.

"Take your arm away," I repeated, angrily, "you shall not hurt my horse!"

He removed his arm with another laugh, and then said, in a tone that gave me a sensation nearer affright than I had yet known—

"Well, my little queen, I have taken my arm away; now tell me your name."

"Why do you wish to know it?" I demanded.

"Perhaps I have a reason—perhaps not—only tell me, if it is no secret."

"My name is Zana," I answered, reddening, for somehow the subject had become painful to me.

"In England, people have two names," he replied.

"But I have only one."

"And that is Zana—nothing more, ha?"

"I have told you."

"That should be enough," he muttered, "but it is well to be certain. Where do you live?" he added.

"Down yonder," I replied, pointing with my whip in the direction of my home.

"In a stone house, cut up with galleries, notched with

balconies, buried in trees and smothered in flowers?" he demanded.

"That is my home," I replied, astonished at the accuracy of his description.

"And how long have you lived there?"

"I do not know why you ask, but it is no secret. I have lived there six years."

"That is, since about the time that Lady Clare died," he observed, as if making a calculation.

"I believe it is," was my answer.

He hesitated a moment, and then said, in a courteous voice,

"Who is your father?"

I had learned to blush at my incapacity to answer this question, and when it was thus abruptly put, the temper burned in my cheek. Rising up haughtily in my stirrup, I gave the bridle an abrupt pull, and poor Jupiter a lash that set him off like an arrow. He almost knocked the man down. I looked back to learn if he was harmed. He called after me in a language that I had never heard spoken before, at least that I could remember, but I understood it. The man was showering curses upon me or my horse.

After the appearance of this singular man, the monotony of my life broke up. I became restless and self-centred, speaking of his presence in the park to no one, but thinking of it with continued wonder. Some mysterious sympathy, wild and painful, but oh, how intense, drew me toward this strange being. I feared, yet longed for his presence—longed to hear again that language at once so strange and so familiar, that had fallen as yet only in curses on my ear, but still carrying a fierce sort of fascination with it.

I rode to the portion of the park where I had seen him, again and again, and sitting on my pony, searched every dingle and group of trees, expecting each moment to see him start, brigand-like, from the leafy gloom. But he did not come, and, filled with restless disappointment, I at length sunk into the ordinary occu-

pations of life, but with an unsettled feeling that had never possessed me before.

By this time I knew that some mystery was attached to my life—that I was nameless, motherless, fatherless. In short, that like a wild hare or a wounded bird, I had been picked up in charity by the wayside, and in charity nurtured by that unique Spanish woman and old Turner. I felt this keenly. As ignorance was swept from my mind, the painful mystery that clung around me darkened my soul with a feeling of unspeakable desolation. I had learned what shame was, and felt it to my heart's core every time my want of name or connections was alluded to. Still the entire force of this isolation, the effect it might have upon my after life and character, could not be felt in all its poignancy, as it was in later times. But its mistiness, the indefinite form which every thing regarding my past history took, made myself a subject of perpetual thought. Upon my memory there was a constant, but unavailing strain. There seemed to be a dark curtain in my mind, hiding all that my soul panted to know, but which I had lost all power to lift or disturb. Thus time wore heavily—heavily months and months—still I saw no more of the man whose memory hung about me, like a superstition, which I had neither power nor wish to throw off.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE INVOLUNTARY HUNT AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

At last an event arose that completely destroyed the beautiful, but dull quietude of our lives. Lord Clare's sister arrived unexpectedly at Greenhurst, and a large party were to follow her and her son down from London, to spend the shooting season.

This sudden invasion of the woods and grounds that had been exclusively ours for so many years, was a source of great annoyance to old Turner. His usual quaint good-humor was sadly disturbed. He seemed quite beside himself with anxiety, and nervously besought me to give up my usual rides, and remain confined to the house if possible during the time Lady Catherine and her son might remain at Greenhurst.

This was asking much of a young creature just verging into girlhood, and full of a strong, fresh curiosity for seeing and feeling the life of which she began to know herself a vital part. Besides, I was a creature of the open air. No bird ever felt a keener necessity for the bright atmosphere, and all the rich beauty of out-door life. Shut up in the house, I was like a wild lark in its cage, moaning, moping, and with no hearty relish of existence left in me. I wished to obey good old Turner. He was so anxious on the point, and seemed so grieved at the idea of depriving me of a single pleasure, that had the thing been possible, I would have kept myself a prisoner for weeks rather than increase his unaccountable perturbation.

But he was seldom with us now, that kind, strange man, and my confinement became terrible—when would it end? How long was I, who had never been confined in-doors a whole day in my life, unless in that one fever—how was I to endure weeks and weeks of this dull imprisonment?

It was too much. Not even to please Turner could I submit to this longer.

One day, I think it was the fourth, my restless spirit broke bounds. I took an opportunity when Maria was occupied, to steal out into the open air. Jupiter's stable, a pretty building that might have passed for a summer-house, stood a little back from the kitchen garden, and I heard him neighing sharply, as if he, like his mistress, were beginning to rebel.

For some reason, I never knew what, except that Turner disliked to have servants about our place, the old man had always taken care of Jupiter with his own hands. With so few objects of love, I naturally often followed him to the pretty

building where Jupiter was stalled, more like a fairy courser than the matchless pony he was.

The pleasant neigh which the animal set up as I approached, awoke all the wild-wood spirit that Turner's interdict had kept down in my bosom so long. I ran to the stable, dragged the side-saddle with its pretty embroidered trappings from its closet, and girded it breathlessly upon Jupiter's back. The creature seemed eager as myself to be upon the hill-side. His ears quivered with delight; he rubbed his head against my shoulder with a mellow whimper, and opened his mouth for the bit the moment he saw the embossed bridle in my hand.

Patting him on the back with a promise of speedy return, I entered the house, ran up to my room, and hurried on my habit of soft green cloth, and the beaver hat with a long black ostrich plume that floated from one side.

The blood was hot in my cheek as I tied the hat on. Without staying to twist up the curls that floated away with the feather in picturesque confusion, I ran off to the stables, huddling up the skirt of my riding-dress with both hands.

I knew that it was wrong—that I should be sorry enough for it before night, but in my willfulness this only gave a keener zest to the enjoyment I proposed to myself.

Away we went, Jupiter and I, dashing through the trees, over the velvet sward, and across the broad avenues, along which the morning sunshine lay in rivers of light. The branches rained down their ripe brown and golden leaves on me as I passed; and a crisp white frost that lay like quicksilver among the grass, gave forth a rasping sound more exhilarating than music, as Jupiter's feet flew over it. The air was clear and bright, with mingled frost and sunshine as it fell upon my face and swept my garments. The blood kindled like wine in my veins. I was wild with the joyousness of free motion, ready for leaping a ditch, flying through the air—any thing wild or daring that had life and quick motion in it.

Away we went toward the uplands, from which a view of Marston Court could be obtained. I thought of the strange

man who had surprised me on that spot as we rushed along—laughed aloud as I remembered how Jupiter and I had baffled him once, how ready we were to do it again. I longed to see him, not for any specified purpose. Nothing then was important enough to have kept me motionless a moment. But abroad as I was, with a wild thirst for adventure of any kind, it would have been something like the excitement I wanted, could the mysterious language with which he cursed me have threatened us with danger once more.

But though I searched for this being, riding around and over the eminence on which he had appeared but once, nothing but the cool, beautiful solitude rewarded me. The luxurious stretch of country between me and Marston Court, brown, hazy, and many-tinted, with the picturesque old building looming up through the rich shadows—all its clear outlines drowned in soft autumnal colors—all its hoariness and age mellowed down and lost in the dreamy distance—this rare view, with the upland on which we stood, was wrapped in quiet. Not a human being was in sight.

A strange desire seized me to visit this building, which had so often charmed me with its loneliness and beauty. It was some miles distant. I knew that, but Jupiter had merely tried his strength as yet, simply breathed himself in our progress to the uplands. He had been shut up in the stable for days, and seemed as wild for action as his mistress.

“Shall we try it, Jupiter?” I said, smoothing his mane with my whip. “There is a glorious run for us, Jupiter, as we have determined to be disobedient and naughty. Ju! suppose we do something worth while?”

At the sound of my voice, the pony began to quiver his ears, and snuffed the air saucily, as if he knew some mischief was afloat, and was eager for his share.

“Come, then,” and I gathered up the bridle, shaking it gleefully. Jupiter gave his head a toss, and away we went toward Marston Court.

The eminence lay behind, and we were in a thickly wooded

little valley, moving rather slowly, for I was charmed by broken glimpses of a small stream that flashed up from the shadows, when the baying of hounds, the tramp of horses, and a wild confusion of sounds swept down the hollow. Before I could tighten my reins, a stag shot by me, so close that Jupiter reared with a wild snort, almost flinging me backward from the saddle.

The stag, a noble animal, cleared the stream with one desperate bound, and for an instant I saw him turn his great, wild eyes, glowing with pain and terror through the shadows. Blood-specked foam dropped from his jaws; and his strained limbs quivered with an agony of terror, that made me tremble upon my saddle with sympathy.

As I looked, the poor animal, whose head was beginning to droop, gave a sudden start, flung up his antlers, and with a desperate staggering leap disappeared up the valley. I had not caught my breath again, when down through the opposite gorge came a train of hounds, leaping forward with cruel ferocity, some breast to breast, others in single file, but all with great, savage eyes and open jaws, howling and baying out their blood-thirsty eagerness. They rushed by me, some on one side of Jupiter, some on the other, spotting his black coat with flakes of foam, and making him start with the fury of their noise.

For myself, I struck at the dogs with my whip, and madly flung it after them. My sympathy for the poor stag was a pang of such agony that it made me wild. But they swept away like the wind, howling back, as it seemed to me, their brutal defiance and derision of my helplessness.

Then like the rush of a tempest, heavy with thunder and red with lightning, came the hunt. The flaming uniforms; those dark horses; the long riding shirts, streaming back like dusky banners; ostrich plumes flashing blackly upon the strong current of wind created by the quick motion of their owners. All this rushed by me, as I have said, like a sudden storm.

Directly over the spot where we stood bore down the hunt,

sweeping us away with it as a swollen stream tosses onward the straws which it encounters.

The stag was nearly run down; the hunters were becoming tired; but Jupiter was fresh as a lark, and held his own bravely with the most noble-blooded hunter of them all.

The hounds were yelling, like fiends, ahead. Some one called out that the stag was at bay. A huntsman, all in scarlet, shot out from the rest onward like an arrow. Jupiter made a sudden bound. It may be in the fierce excitement that I urged him, but he gave a great leap, and kept neck and neck with the huntsman.

Beneath a pile of rocks that choked up one end of the valley, the poor stag was run down. With his delicate fore hoofs lifted up with a desperate effort at another spring, he stood one instant with his head turned back, and his great, agonized eyes fixed upon the dogs. The rocks were too high. His poor limbs exhausted, he could not make the leap, but wheeled back and desperately tossed the first hound, who fell with a yelp upon the stones.

But the whole pack was upon him, scrambling up the rocks, and making fiercely for his throat from all points.

"Save him—save him!" I shouted, striking Jupiter with my clenched hand. "Save him—save him!"

I rushed by the huntsman. Hitherto we had kept, as I have said, neck and neck; but Jupiter felt the sting of my blow, and gave a mad bound that brought us in the midst of the dogs. I still urged him on, striving to trample down the fierce brutes beneath his hoofs. The stag knew it, I do believe. The poor animal felt that I was his friend. No human eyes ever had a deeper agony of appeal in them. I sprang from Jupiter's back down among the dogs, and cast myself before their victim.

I saw the huntsman leap from his horse and plunge among the dogs.

"Move—come away, the hounds will tear you to pieces," he shouted, beating fiercely about with his whip.

"They shall not kill him; call them off, I say, these beasts shall *not* kill him," I shrieked, in reply.

"That moment a hound sprang upon me, tearing my riding-skirt, and almost bringing me to the earth.

I cried aloud, but not with fear. The excitement was terrible, but there was no cowardice in it.

"Great heavens ! she will be devoured," I heard him say; then he leaped like a flame upon the dog, and grappling him by the throat, bore him backward to the earth.

"Now run, run !" he cried, panting with the hound in his power.

"No !" I answered stoutly, "they will tear him to pieces if I do. Keep them off—keep them off."

He made no answer, but wrestled more fiercely with the hound.

That moment the whole hunt came up, men, keepers, and women surrounding us in their gorgeous dresses like a battalion of cavalry.

I heard a clamor of voices, the shrieks of women, the excited shouts of huntsmen giving orders. Keepers rushed in among the hounds with their clubs. In a few moments the dogs were driven back crouching and snarling among their masters. I stood alone by the poor stag, with a host of eyes upon me; then, for the first time, I began to tremble.

"Here," said a stout old squire, whose white hair fell like snow from under the close hunting cap, "here, George Irving, you have won the right to cut his throat. Thomas, where is the knife ?"

A keeper came forward, presenting a sharp hunting-knife.

"You will not—you will *not*," I said, clasping my hands, and standing face to face with the youth who had saved me. I felt that my lips were quivering, and that great tears were dropping like hail-stones down my burning cheeks—"you will not."

"No," answered the youth, taking the knife and holding it toward me. "It is not mine, this brave child was in first. I

found her, like the stag, at bay, braving the hounds. Tell me, shall not the life of this animal be hers?"

A loud hallo answered him, echoed by a chorus of musical female voices.

The youth reached forth his knife again, but I rejected it. The stag was safe, and my heart so full of joy, that I felt it breaking all over me. The noble face before me brightened as if from the reflection of mine, and for the first time I saw that it was a very young man who had saved me. Young and—but I will not describe him—for upon his features at that moment there was something of which no language can give the least idea.

I felt the blood rushing up to my face, for now all things became clear, and I knew that a score of strange eyes were wondering at me. The feather in my hat was broken, and fell prone upon my shoulder; my skirt had been badly wrenched and mangled by the dogs; their muddy foot-prints were trampled all over it; a morbid sense of the beautiful made me shrink with shame, as I saw all those eyes fixed upon my dilapidated state.

"Where is Jupiter?" I said, turning to my young friend. "Will you search for him, I should like to go away?"

But my pony had retreated beyond the crowd, and could not be seen. This increased my distress. I sat down upon a stone, and looking at the exhausted stag, began to think myself the most miserable object of the two.

I heard a buzz of voices around me, and could distinguish the words, "Who is it? She is strange to every one here. Where can the picturesque creature have sprung from?"

That moment a pang shot through my heart. Who indeed was I? How came I there? By a gross act of disobedience to my best friend? I felt that my face was bathed with blushes and with tears; for the first time in my life I was ashamed of myself.

A lady rode close up to me, so close that her skirts swept my shoulder.

"Whose little girl are you?" she said. "You are by far too young for a scene like this."

I looked up and knew the face. It was Lady Catherine Irving, a little more spare, and with a host of fine wrinkles accumulated on her haughty face, but with the same cold, white complexion ; the same self-satisfied look.

"Ah, you seem to know me," she said, settling her beaver hat with one hand. "Now tell me your name ; don't be afraid."

"I am not afraid, not in the least," I answered. "Why should I be?"

"True enough ; what a bright little wood-nymph it is," she continued, smiling back upon two scarlet clad gentlemen behind her. "I suppose there really is nothing superlatively frightful about me—ha !"

"Something superlatively the reverse," answered the gentleman thus challenged.

"You hear, little wood-nymph," she said, after appropriating this compliment with a bend of the head, "there is nothing to fear, so speak out. Where do you live ? How came you among all these gentlemen and ladies?"

"I live in the park, near Greenhurst, madam, with Mr. Turner"——

"Ha !" exclaimed Lady Catherine, with a sharp glance at my face. "Go home, child—how came you here?"

"I came on my pony, madam."

"But the hunt, what on earth brought you there?" cried the lady, seeming to become more and more displeased.

"The hunt—if all this company means that—came across me, and carried Jupiter and I along."

"But how came you dismounted and among the hounds?"

"They were all upon the poor stag, and I could not bear it," I replied, simply.

"Mother," said the young man walking close to the lady and speaking in a low voice, "let us take some other time for questioning her. Lead off the party, so many persons terrify the poor child."

"Mount your horse then," she replied, sharply, "I will see you again child. I must have some explanation of all this. You are right, George, this is no place. Mount—mount!"

The youth hesitated, looked at me, at the stag, and then rather wistfully at his mother.

"We are waiting," she said, with an impatient wave of her whip, and a glance at me that brought a flash of red to my cheeks. I, in my innocence, thought that she was displeased with the torn state of my poor dress.

The youth mounted, and the hunt dispersed, breaking up into groups and pairs, and scattering a red gleam through the woods.

CHAPTER XXXI.

MY UNEXPECTED ESCORT.

I WAS left alone, I and the poor trembling, exhausted stag, who lay partly upon his knees, gazing at me through his filmy and half shut eyes.

I looked around for Jupiter, but he was not to be seen—no living thing but the worried stag and myself in all that dim solitude.

A sense of exhaustion and of loneliness fell upon me. My heart grew mournful, and the poor stag with his stiffened limbs and the foam dried on his lips, filled me with compassion. I went down to the brook, brought up water in my hands, and bathed his mouth with it. When this was done, the animal struggled to his feet and staggered away down toward the water, leaving me alone. I felt this total desertion keenly, and burying my face in my lap, began to cry like the child I was.

I sat full ten minutes sobbing forth the desolation of my heart, when the quick tramp of a horse made me look up. I

thought it must be Jupiter returning to his duty, but instead of him I saw the young huntsman riding gently through the trees, and now close by me.

I started up, ashamed of my tears, and looked resolutely another way, hoping to escape his notice, but he sprang off his horse and was at my side before I could dash the drops from my burning cheek.

"So you have been crying, poor child?" he said, with a sort of patronizing manliness that would have amused an older person. "No wonder, we were a set of savages to leave you here alone, and with no means of getting home."

"It was savage!" I said, realizing for the first time how badly I had been used; "but the animals were just as cruel, the stag and Jupiter; I would not have believed it of Jupiter, he used to love me; and the very first trouble, off he goes with the rest!"

Tears came into my eyes again at this thought, but I quenched and crushed them between my eyelashes, too proud for an exposure of my keen distress at the desertion of Jupiter.

"Nay," said the youth, smiling, "but I have come back to see after you."

"Did you?" I replied, with a gush of gratitude; "to see after me, and for nothing else?"

"What else should bring me back?" he replied, looking around as if in search of something. "So the stag has gone too, ungrateful beast. I had a fancy to fasten some badge on his horns that he might be safe hereafter. He was a noble old fellow after all, no wonder he was glad to get away from this spot!"

"But Jupiter," I said, with growing confidence in the youth, "what can have become of my pony? How am I to get home? Oh, if I only had been good—if I had but stayed indoors as they told me!"

"As who told you, lady bird?"

"Mr. Turner. He knew that I had no business abroad when the country was full of strangers!"

"And is Turner a relative? What control can he possess over you?"

"He," I replied, kindling with wonder that any one should doubt Turner's right to control me. "Mr. Turner, I belong to him! No one else owns me. Scarcely any one else cares for me. Why, in the wide, wide world, he is the only person who ever shall control me—dear, blessed Mr. Turner!"

"He is a whole-hearted, queer old soul, sure enough," was the reply; "but certainly you are not his child; I never knew that he was married."

"His child!" I cried, breathless with the thought. "I—I don't know—how should I? Is his child—his own? What put the idea into any one's head? It sounds so strange. Do you mean that Mr. Turner is my father that people ask after so often?"

"Nay, I mean nothing—only is Mr. Turner, as you call him, married?"

"No, I think not. Maria, I am sure, isn't married; but I never asked, never thought of it."

He was about to answer, but that instant a low, timid neigh from behind the spur of a rock close by, made me start.

"That is Jupiter—that is Jupiter!" I exclaimed, and with this joyful shout away I bounded, gathering up my torn skirt in both arms, and full of spirit once more.

Sure enough there stood my pony, sheltered and hidden by the rock, to which the pretty creature had fled from the crowd of huntsmen. The sound of my voice called forth his neigh, and never did a dumb creature express more satisfaction at the presence of its mistress.

"There you see—you see it was not Jupiter's fault, the dear, dear old rogue. He was so wise to creep away and wait till those hateful people were all gone!" I exclaimed triumphantly, laying my hot cheek against the glossy neck of my horse.

"And did all those people really seem so hateful?" replied the youth, caressing Jupiter.

"All! I don't know. That lady was the only one I saw

distinctly. The rest floated around me, surging up and down like a red cloud. But I shall never forget her !”

“ And did she fill you with repulsion ?—was she the hateful one ?”

“ I had seen her before ; I knew her !”

“ Indeed—where ?” said the youth, in a displeased manner.

“ I would rather not say—it is unpleasant to talk about,” I answered, greatly annoyed.

“ But it is years since my—that is Lady Catherine, has been at Greenhurst,” he answered, thoughtfully. “ Never, I think, since the very sudden death of Lady Clare. You must have mistaken her for some other person.”

I was greatly excited. The remembrance of that heartless voice, when I was taken into Greenhurst, so helpless, stung me.

“ No—no,” I answered, “ there are some things one never forgets, never mistakes. I have seen that face in my dreams, and hated it in my thoughts too long for any hope of that !”

The youth drew himself back, and ceased to caress my horse. There was a quiet dignity in his manner that made me ashamed of my own vehemence.

“ That lady is my mother !” he said calmly, but with a tone of cold reproof in his voice.

I scanned his face with a keen wish to disbelieve him. But now that he was angry, there was a resemblance between his features and those I did in truth hate.

“ I am sorry for it,” I said, with a nervous sob—“ very, very !”

“ Sorry for what, that she is my mother—or that you have spoken disrespectfully of her ?” he questioned, more gently than before.

“ I am sorry for everything that has happened to-day, and for my own part in it most of all. It began in wicked disobedience, and will end—oh, how will it end ? What will Mr. Turner think of me when he knows this ?”

“ Why, what great sin are you crying for ?” he said, smiling once more. “ Certainly you are a very free-spoken little per-

son ; but we must not let Turner quite kill you ; so don't be afraid !”

“ He kill me ? What, Turner ? No—no, not that. Afraid, afraid ? Yes, yes, I am afraid, for I have done wrong. Oh, what will become of me ? I never was afraid before—never, never.”

“ But what have you done ?” he asked, still more kindly.

“ Mr. Turner forbade me leaving the house. He told me how wrong it was when Lady Catherine's company might come across me at any time ; he tried—oh, so much—to keep me happy in-doors ; but it was of no use, I could not endure it. It was as if I were a bird beating my wings against a cage. The wickedness was in me all the time. I thought it was nonsense staying in the house, because other people might be abroad. Then it was so tempting, Mr. Turner at Greenhurst—my *bonne* occupied—the pony neighing for me to come and take him out. Really, after all, it seemed as if I could *not* help it ”——

George Irving laughed so gleefully that I could not go on, but began to laugh too.

“ And so you just broke loose and ran away ?” he said, patting Jupiter again and again.

“ Yes, I stole the horse, saddled him myself, and was off like a bird,” I replied, reassured by his laughter, and feeling the consciousness of my disobedience borne away on his merry tones.

“ And here you are, full seven miles from home, all alone but for me, after braving a pack of hounds in full cry, afraid of old Turner's frown, as if he were the Grand Mogul.”

He laughed again, but this light way of naming my benefactor awoke the conscience again in my bosom.

“ It was very wrong—oh, that I had stayed at home !” I exclaimed, with a fresh pang.

“ Well, well, don't fret about it any more,” he said, with a little impatient playfulness that made me smile again. “ Let me lift you to Jupiter's back—a pretty pony he is, my little

lady—and scamper home like a good child. Ten chances to one old Turner will know nothing about it.”

I allowed him to lift me to the saddle, and felt myself blushing as he arranged my torn skirts with evident anxiety to give them a decent appearance.

“Now,” he said, springing on his hunter, “I must put your pony to his metal again. Unless I overtake Lady Catherine before she reaches home, my position will very much resemble yours! Come, let us start as we came, neck and neck!”

“No,” said I, brightening with new spirit, “I came in ahead—your hunter fell a little behind Jupiter.”

“But try him now—his speed will be of use to us both,” was the laughing reply. “My mother will be impatient, and her anger may prove worse to bear than old Turner’s, let me tell you.”

He put his horse into a quick canter, and my pony stretched himself vigorously to keep up.

“But please leave us to ourselves!” I pleaded, breathless, with a new dread; “I do not wish to go with you to Lady Catherine!”

“Well—no, I am afraid her ladyship might prove formidable, were she to be surprised after that fashion a second time,” he replied, slightly checking his hunter, “I only propose to see you and Jupiter ~~safe~~ on some avenue of the park, where you can scamper home in ~~safety~~. I must be indoors before Lady Catherine, or this escapade will be difficult to account for.”

My cheek grew hot with mortified pride; I felt that he was afraid of some annoyance, perhaps ashamed of having returned for me. Without a word I drew in Jupiter with a suddenness that made him leap—wheeled him on one side, and plunged into the woods, leaving the gentleman, for a moment, unconscious of my desertion.

He followed directly, urging his hunter to a run, and calling after me as he dashed through the trees. I took no heed, and gave back no answer; the blood was burning in my temples; I felt my lips curve and quiver with insulted pride. No man or

boy living should speak to me, or look at me, who was ashamed to do it before all the world. Then my heart began to ache even in its wrath. I had thought so well of him, his interest in my loneliness, his brave fight with the hounds—why, why did he exert all this tender strength in my behalf to wound me so cruelly afterward? He was by my side, but I kept my head averted with girlish willfulness, expressing my displeasure rudely like any other spoiled child.

“Will you not tell me why you ran away?” he said, attempting to rest one hand upon my saddle as he cantered by me.

Oh, how I longed to lift my pretty riding-whip and strike him hard across the face! I think the act would have appeased me.

“Say, child, will you explain this bit of very bad manners?” he urged, evidently determined to provoke me to some reply.

“Child!” This was too much; the whole taunt stung me into speech. I checked Jupiter, and felt the fire leap into my face as it was turned toward my persecutor. He looked grave—offended.

“Because I wish to ride alone: I’m not used to company, and don’t want any, especially of persons who are afraid or ashamed of being kind to me,” I said, half crying amid my fiery vexation.

“I am not afraid, and am not ashamed,” he answered gravely; “yet you cannot understand, child, for with all that fierce temper you are but a child!”

“I am more than twelve—thirteen, fifteen, for what any one knows,” I said, half blinding myself with tears. “I understand what it is just as well as you can tell me; you are afraid of that haughty person, your mother. You are not quite satisfied with having braved the hounds before a whole crowd of people, for a little girl who has only Mr. Turner to care for her. Oh, yes, I know—I could feel that without knowing!”

“Strange child,” he said, with a grave smile. “Who taught you all this, so young, and without the faith becoming this girlish beauty?”

The anger was burning out in my heart. There was some-

thing manly and reproving in his calm seriousness that subdued me. He reached out his hand, while the smile brightened all over his face.

"Come, let us be friends—you cannot keep angry with me, because I have not deserved it!"

I gave him my hand. He stooped in his saddle as if to press his lips upon it, but checked the impulse; and, holding it tight an instant, let it drop, saying very earnestly,

"I would not have wounded you for the world."

That instant the undergrowth close by us was sharply parted, and Turner broke into the path on which we had paused.

I felt the blood leave my face, and, for the first time, trembled at the sight of my benefactor. The old man looked sternly across me to George Irving, whom he neither saluted nor addressed; but, taking Jupiter by the bit, said in a deep, husky voice, that made the heart die in my bosom,

"Zana, come away!"

I dropped the bridle, and covering my face with both gauntleted hands, cowered down upon my saddle with a keen sense of the humiliation which he was witnessing.

I listened breathlessly.

"Turner, if you will let the pony move on, I will dismount and lead my hunter while we have a little talk."

It was Irving's voice, and I listened breathlessly for the reply. Some seconds passed before it came; Turner's throat seemed husky.

"To-morrow, Mr. George, I'll be at the Hurst," he said, "and then as much talk as pleases you; but now I must take this child home."

"But she seems terrified; you will not—surely you will not be harsh with her?"

"Harsh with her! with Zana—was I ever harsh to you in my life, little one?" urged the old man, and the husky voice was broken up with tenderness.

I uncovered my face, and holding out both hands to the old man, turned toward young Irving.

"You know how wrong I have been—see how forgiving, how kind, how good *he* is!"

The old man's face began to work. The fine wrinkles quivered over his cheek and around his mouth, a sure sign of emotion in him. He lifted my two gloved hands and kissed them fondly. All at once he dropped my hands and went up to Irving.

"Mr. Irving—my dear Master George, forget that you have seen her—forget all about it—promise me that you will."

"That would be difficult," answered the youth, glancing at me with a smile.

"It would indeed," said the old man, looking fondly in my face. "God help us—this is a bad business! At any rate, leave us now!"

The young man turned, bent his head, and wheeling his hunter, disappeared.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE UNWELCOME VISITOR.

I SPENT a wakeful night, disturbed by a host of new feelings and strange thoughts, that crowded upon me like a rush of waters. All night long a review of the day's hunt went forward in my fancy. The brilliant dresses and those strange faces circled me with a sort of fascination. Sometimes they smiled warningly, then they giped at my torn garments—and foremost of all was the proud face of Lady Catherine. Oh, how I began to hate that woman! It was the bitter antagonism of a lifetime striking root deep in my heart.

Toward morning I thought of Turner, with a pang that was punishment enough for the sin of my first disobedience. I knew

that he was not only grieved but plunged into difficulties on my account—that all the evils he had been so anxious to guard against were already brought on by my obstinate self-indulgence.

This reflection made me heart-sick, and I turned away from the soft daylight as it broke through my room, ashamed to receive it on my ungrateful face. With faltering steps I went down stairs and seated myself in the little breakfast-room. Turner was in the garden, but though I had not the cowardice to shrink from encountering him in the house, I could not summon courage to seek him.

He saw me at the window looking sad enough, I dare say, and, coming up, gave me a handful of tiny white roses, which were the glory of a plant that he had never allowed to be touched before. I felt the tears rushing to my eyes, and creeping toward the old man, murmured in the deepest humility,

“Oh, Mr. Turner, why don’t you scold me? Why not punish my wickedness?”

“Because,” he answered, with a miserable shake of the head, “because you will be punished enough, poor thing, before night, or I am mistaken.”

“I hope so—I’m sure it would be a satisfaction to be soundly reprimanded. You break my heart with all this kindness.”

“Here comes one,” said Turner, growing red in the face, “who will not sin in that way, I can answer.”

I followed his look, and saw Lady Catherine Irving coming through the garden, walking rather quickly, and brushing down the autumn flowers with the sweep of her garments. On seeing us she resumed the stateliness usual to her movements, and stooped now and then to gather the snowy flowers of a chrysanthemum, which she seemed to examine curiously while approaching the house.

“Ah, Turner,” she said, drawing toward the window, “what a pretty little nest you have here; and what flowers! I have never seen any thing to compare with these,” and forming a ring with the thumb and fore finger of her left hand, she drew

the white tufts softly through it, as Nero might have trifled on the day of his mother's murder. "Why, you live here with your little family quite like fairies. No wonder you are so often absent from Greenhurst."

"I hope that none of the duties my lord left for me to perform are neglected, madam," answered Turner, with a degree of dignity that charmed me.

"No, no—I do not complain—far from it, good Turner—that I am here is a proof of it. Your child—I hope she was neither frightened nor hurt by the hounds."

"No, madam," I answered, leaning through the sash. "It was rather lonesome being left by myself with the poor stag ; but the young gentleman"—

"Hush !" said Turner, sternly, glancing toward Lady Catherine, whose cheek flushed with sudden color.

I saw the color and the glitter in her eyes, more expressive still, and even Turner's caution could not control me. I was determined to let her know that her son had returned to protect me. The remembrance that he had seemed to fear her knowledge of it only urged me on.

"The young gentleman came back and put Jupiter and me into the right path : but for that I don't know what would have become of us."

"Your daughter seems a bright, and—forgive me, good Turner—rather forward little thing," said the lady, lifting the flowers softly to her lips, as she gave him a searching glance. "I am very glad though, that she is unharmed."

Turner looked at her, and then with a restless movement at me. The color came up among his wrinkles, and his features began to work as if some unfinished resolution had set them in motion. Before he could speak, however, Lady Catherine's voice broke in again,

"And your wife—my good Turner—really I must have a sight of her and this pretty home of yours—quite a *bijou* in the grounds, truly !"

Placing a richly enamelled glass to her eyes, the lady took a

quiet survey of the building before Turner could find words to answer her.

Never had I seen the old man so agitated. The color came and went beneath his wrinkles ; his thin lips grew pale and purple by turns ; his state of irresolution was painful.

"I will step in and see your wife !" said Lady Catherine, dropping her glass to the full length of its Venetian chain, and looking around for the door.

Now Turner became calm ; every muscle and nerve settled down. He stood more firmly on the ground, and looking his tormentor steadily in the face, answered,

"Some one must have been joking at my expense, my lady. I have no wife !"

"No wife !" exclaimed Lady Catherine, with a start that even I could see was premeditated. "No wife—and this child ?"

"You are mistaken," said Turner, "this is not my child. Yourself saw me when I took her up from your own door-stone, or rather the door-stone of Greenhurst, eight years ago."

A cold smile curled Lady Catherine's lip. She lifted her glass again and eyed me through it. "I remember the circumstance," she said, and the hateful smile deepened—"I remember, too, that a child disappeared very mysteriously but a short time before from this nest—two children in fact—if my people told me aright."

"They did tell you aright, lady," said Turner, sternly—but she interrupted him.

"One, the elder, went out to service, I fancy. This one dropped, miraculously, on my door-step. Well, well, my good Turner, no one thinks of quarrelling with this fanciful way of adopting your own children ; but her mother—unless you are really married to this woman, she must go. I cannot answer it to society—to Lord Clare, the most particular man on earth—if she is allowed to remain on the estate a day longer."

"Madam," said Turner, "I have said but the truth ; Zana,

there, is no more my daughter than her Spanish bonne is my wife !”

“Who is her—her father?—who is her mother then?” asked Lady Catherine.

I remarked that her voice faltered in putting this question, and she could not look in Turner’s face.

Turner regarded her firmly, and a faint smile stirred his lip. Lady Catherine saw it, and once more there arose a shade of color in her cheek.

“Lady, I can answer these questions no more than yourself, for you were present when I found the poor child.”

“And had you never seen her before?” questioned the lady.

Turner hesitated and seemed to reflect; but at last he answered firmly enough.

“It is impossible for me to say yes or no.”

The lady played with her flowers awhile, and then spoke again very softly, and with a degree of persuasion in her voice.

“Well, Turner, we will not press you too hard. I cannot forget that you were my brother’s favorite and oldest servant, and now his agent—that he trusted you.”

“He did indeed,” cried the old man, casting a glance full of affection at me.

“I am sure you would do nothing that could cast reproach on him,” continued the lady, placing a strong emphasis on the pronoun.

“Not for the universe,” ejaculated Turner.

“Yet, while you live thus—while there is a doubt left regarding this child, cannot you see that even my noble brother may be condemned as—as sanctioning—you understand—this species of immorality—on his estates?”

“But how am I to prevent this?” exclaimed Turner, after a moment of perplexed thought, during which he gazed on Lady Catherine, as if searching for some meaning in her words which they did not wholly convey.

“Let me tell you—for I have been thinking on this subject a

good deal—she is a fine-spirited girl that, a little wild and gipsyish ; but many of our guests were struck with her.”

“No wonder !” exclaimed Turner, with his face all in a glow. “Who could help it ?”

“So they inquired a good deal about her, and when it came out that she lived here under your protection, of course, it led to questions and old things—nonsensical gossip about by-gone times that quite made me nervous—you understand, good Turner. So I told them what I am sure is the truth even yet—that the Spanish woman here is her mother, that she is your own child—that you are married.”

Turner shook his head.

“Then it will be so,” persisted the lady, “or as I said before, both woman and child must leave the estate.”

“You cannot be in earnest !” said Turner.

“Does it seem like earnest when you find me here at this hour of the morning ?” replied the lady.

“But it was Lord Clare’s desire—his command—that I hold authority in this house until his return,” persisted Turner.

“He mentions nothing of this in his letters to us. Besides, you cannot mean to say that he has made such provisions for these females.”

“No, Zana was not here at the time ; but I know, I am sure”——

“Be sure of nothing !” exclaimed Lady Catherine, with more energy than she had yet exhibited—“be sure of nothing, if you love your master, but that you can *serve* him best by silencing this subject of public gossip at once. Marry the woman with whom you have been so long domesticated !”

“*Marry !*” exclaimed Turner, with a terrible twist of the face, as if the word had not really come home to his heart till then, “marry at this time of life, and a Spanish woman. Wouldn’t it do as well, my lady, if they set me in the pillory for an hour or so !”

“It might not do so well for the girl, perhaps,” was the stern reply.

"For her sake I would do anything!"

"It is a great pity to keep the poor thing caged up here: and what is to become of her in the end? As your daughter she can come up to the house and see something of society.

"What, a servant, madam?" cried Turner, reddening fiercely.

"Nothing of the kind; you are no common man, Turner; and certainly that child, with her wild, arch, nay, haughty style, might pass anywhere. She shall come to the Hurst and obtain some accomplishments. I should fancy her greatly about the house. She might pick up a little education from my son's tutor, who will be down in a week or two, and become quite an ornament to the establishment."

"She would be an ornament to any place," said Turner, proudly.

"Yes," replied the lady, smiling upon me, "any man might be proud of her for a daughter. I dare say we shall be excellent friends soon—meantime think of what I have said. This is a charming place, it would be a pity for the child to leave it. To-morrow let me have your answer."

She moved proudly away, holding up her dress, and winding carefully through the flower beds, as if her errand had been the commonest thing in the world.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

TURNER'S STRUGGLE AGAINST MARRIAGE.

I COULD not realize the importance of Lady Catherine's visit all at once. It had been carried on so quietly, so like the ordinary common-place of her patrician life, that its meaning seemed lost in sound. I could even amuse myself with the excitement of poor Turner, who, folding his arms behind him, went furiously

pacing up and down the garden, treading everything down in his path, and wading knee deep through the tall autumn blossoms, jerking his feet among them now and then, as if it were a relief to destroy anything that came in his way.

I had never seen the old man in this mood before, and almost thought him mad, for he muttered to himself, and seemed quite unconscious that I was a witness to the scene.

At last he came by the window with a long pendant of honey-suckle trailing from his boot.

"Mr. Turner," I said, laughing softly as he came up.

"Oh, you can be amused—easily amused—children always are!" he exclaimed savagely. "Now can you see what mischief that ride has done? Sit and laugh, truly—but what am I to do?"

"Lady Catherine says you must get married," I answered, mischievously, for rage, instead of appalling, was invariably sure to amuse me.

"Married!" almost shrieked the old man, "and so you have brought me to *that*, you—you!"

The contortions of his face were too droll. I could not keep from laughing again.

"Zana," said the old man, and tears absolutely stood in his eyes, "I was good to you—I loved you—what right had you to bring this misfortune on me? I knew that evil would come of it when I found Jupiter's stall empty; but marriage, oh, I did not dream of that calamity."

"And is marriage always a calamity?" I inquired, sobered by his evident feeling.

"Yes!"

He hissed forth the monosyllable as if it had been a drop of poison that burned his tongue.

"And you dislike it very much?"

"Dislike it!"

There is no describing the bitterness that he crowded into these two words.

"Then do not—for my sake do not be married. Why

should you? I'm sure it will do me no good. I don't care in the least for it!"

His sharp eyes brightened for an instant, and he looked at me eagerly, like a convict on whom sudden hopes of escape had dawned.

"Then you wouldn't much mind leaving this place, Zana?" he said.

My heart sunk, but I strove to answer cheerfully.

"No, no, I—I don't think it would seem so hard after a little!"

"And Jupiter, and Cora?"

I burst into tears.

"There now, that is it—I'm answered—I was sure it would break her little heart," cried the old man, desperately—"I'll do it. I'll bind myself, hand and foot—I'll make an eternal old fool of myself. I'll—I'll. It's no use struggling, I'm sold, lost—tied up—married!"

He uttered the last word ferociously, casting it down as if it had been a rock.

"Not for me, Turner—not for me," I said, losing all sense of the ludicrous in his genuine repugnance to the measure Lady Catherine had proposed. "I do not understand this—what on earth is the reason they cannot let us live in peace?"

"Because you must be cutting loose from my authority—cantering about like a little Nimrod in long skirts—fighting hounds—getting acquainted with young men whom you ought to hate—to hate, I say Miss Zana! Because you are a little fool, and I am an old one. Because, because—but it's no use talking."

I began to see my disobedience in its true light. Certainly it was impossible to comprehend why it had led to the necessity which my old benefactor so much deplored, but I felt to the bottom of my heart that this evil, whatever it was, had been brought on by myself.

"Mr. Turner," I said, "if I stay in-doors a month, nay, a whole year, will it do any good?"

“No—not the least!”

“What can I do? Indeed, indeed, Turner, I am very sorry,” I persisted; “but let us go away; it will be far better to leave Cora and Jupiter, the house and everything.”

Why did I lose my voice so suddenly? Why did the thought that George Irving was at Greenhurst depress my heart and speech? I felt myself growing pale, and looking despairingly around the lovely garden, for the first time realizing how dear every flower had become.

Turner looked at me wistfully, and at length went away. I saw him an hour after wandering to and fro in the wilderness. I did not leave the window, though breakfast had been long waiting. The whole conversation had bewildered me. Why should Turner dread this marriage so much—was it not right? It seemed to me a very easy thing when so much depended on it. I had never thought seriously of marriage in my whole life, and its very mysteriousness made me look upon Turner as the victim of some hidden evil. I was resolved that he should not be sacrificed. What was my *bonne*, friends, Jupiter, to the comfort of an old friend like him?

I went forth into the wilderness, and found him sitting at the root of a huge chestnut, with his clasped hands drooping idly down between his knees, and gazing steadfastly on the earth.

“Zana,” he said, reaching forth his hand, “sit down here, and tell me all about it. What have I been saying? Have I been very cross, darling?”

His kindness went to my heart. I sat down upon a curved root of the tree, and leaned softly against him.

“Yes, a little cross, but not half so much as I deserved,” I said, meekly. “But tell me now, Mr. Turner, what is this marriage, what is there so dreadful about it?”

“Nothing, child—nothing, he answered, with forced cheerfulness. “I dare say it is very pleasant—very pleasant indeed to some people. I know of persons who are very fond of weddings, quite charmed with them; but for my part a funeral

seems more the thing—there is some certainty about that. It settles a man, leaves him alone, provides for him.”

“I never saw a wedding,” said I, thoughtfully, “and but one funeral. That was very sad, Mr. Turner ; if a wedding is like that, don’t be married—it is dreadful ! Are weddings like that funeral ever ?”

“I have seen weddings a great deal more solemn,” he answered, still gazing on the ground. “One that seemed but the mockery of a funeral, and ended in one !”

“What one was that ?” I questioned, while a cold chill crept mysteriously through my veins.

“It was Lord Clare’s wedding that I was thinking of,” he answered, looking up, “and that happened three days before I found you on his door-step.”

I looked fearfully around. It seemed as if a funeral train were creeping through the woods—the ghost of some procession that lived in my memory, yet would not give itself forth.

“And do they wish your wedding to be like that ?” I whispered, creeping close to him.

“Like that !” said Turner, lifting up his eyes, “God forbid ! Mine, if it must be, is but the expiation of that !”

“And would Lord Clare desire it ?—would he insist like Lady Catherine ?” I questioned. “Would he turn me out of doors unless you married Maria, do you think ?”

“He turn you out of doors—he, child ? I only wish we had some way of reaching him !”

“Where is he now ?”

“In Africa, the last we heard, searching for what he will never find.”

“And what is that, Mr. Turner ?”

“Peace, child, peace—a thing that he will never know again on this side the grave !”

“Is he a bad man then ?” I persisted, strangely enthralled by the subject.

"Millions of worse men will live and revel after he has pined himself into the grave.

"Let us leave this place and seek for him," I said, filled with a sympathy so deep that my very heart trembled. "If he is unhappy, you and I may do him some good."

"Oh, child, if you could but remember. If I had but some little proof," he answered, gazing at me impressively.

"Proof of what, Turner?—what can you wish to prove?"

"That in which nothing but God can help me!" was the desponding reply.

"It seemed to me," said I, pressing each hand upon my temples, for they were hot with unavailing thought—"it seemed to me as if the thing that you wish to know was beating in my brain all the time. Something there is, blank and dark in my memory—how shall I bring it forth that you may read it?"

"Wait God's own time, my child," answered the old man, gently taking the hands from my temples, "sooner or later that which we wish to learn will be made clear. Come now, let us go home!"

"But they will not let us stay there, and I am ready to go," I remonstrated.

"Yes, they will let us stay now," he answered, with a grim smile.

"Why?"

"Because I shall marry the *Spanish woman* to-morrow."

There was a lingering bitterness in the emphasis placed on the words *Spanish woman*, that lengthened the phrase for a moment. It was the last I ever witnessed. Turner did not sacrifice himself by halves.

"Zana," said the noble old man, as we moved slowly toward the house, "you must not tell Maria of Lady Catherine's visit, or of—of my shameful passion after it. Women have strange ideas about love, and so on, and she might take it into her head to ask awkward questions if she knew all. Do you understand?"

Yes, I understood perfectly. He was anxious to save the poor Spanish woman from a knowledge of his repugnance to the marriage. I promised the secrecy that he desired.

We entered the breakfast-room together. Maria had been waiting for us more than an hour, but she ran cheerfully for the coffee urn and muffins without a word of comment.

I saw Turner look at her with some appearance of interest once or twice during the meal. The queer old philosopher was evidently reconciling himself to the fate that an hour ago had half driven him mad. Maria certainly looked younger and more interesting than usual that morning. Unlike the Spanish women in general, she wore her years becomingly, the moist climate of England, and the quiet of her life conspiring to keep from her the haggard look of old age that marks even mid-life in her native land. The picturesque costume which she had never been induced to change, was also peculiarly becoming; the dark blue skirt and bodice of black cloth; the long braids of her hair, slightly tinged with snow, but gay with knots of scarlet ribbon; the healthy stoutness of her person united in rendering my faithful *bonne* anything but a repulsive person. I began to have less compassion for Turner, and with the mobility of youth amused myself with fancying Maria's astonishment when she should learn what the fates had in store for her.



CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE RELUCTANT PROPOSAL.

"ZANA, child, will you see to the chrysanthemums that were trailing across the walk this morning?—they will be trodden down."

I looked in Turner's face as he said this, and felt a mischievous smile quivering on my lips. The dear old fellow grew red as a winter apple, then a grave, reproving look followed, and I was glad to escape into the garden.

It was very wrong, I admit, but a curiosity to see how Turner would make love overpowered all sense of honor. I confess to lingering in sight of the windows, cautiously keeping myself out of view all the time. Turner and Maria still kept their seats by the breakfast-table. His face was toward me, but I could discern that one elbow was pressed on the table, and he sat sideways, looking hard at the opposite wall while speaking. But Maria was in full view, and a very picturesque portrait she made framed in by the open window. I watched her face as it changed from perplexity to wonder, from wonder to a strange sort of bashful pleasure. Her cheeks grew red; her great, black, Spanish eyes lighted up like those of a deer; yet she seemed ashamed of the feelings speaking there, as if they were unbecoming to her years.

All at once she arose, and, coming round the table, leaned against the window-frame. This movement brought me within hearing, but I could not escape without being discovered; so after taking one wrong step, I was forced into another still more dishonorable. At first Maria spoke in her usual broken English, which I cannot attempt to give, as its peculiarity lay rather in the tone than the words.

"This is very strange, Mr. Turner. Why do you speak of this thing now after so many years? What has happened that you talk to me of marriage? You say it is better for the child—better for us all. But why?"

"I will make a good husband to you—at any rate do the best I can!" pleaded poor Turner, sadly out of place in his love-making.

"Perhaps you have fallen in love with me all of a sudden," said my *bonne*, half bitterly, half in a questioning manner, as if she faintly hoped he would assent to the idea.

"I—what, I fall in love!" cried Turner, and his face writhed

into a miserable smile ; "it isn't in me to make a fool of myself at this age. I hope you have a better opinion of me than that."

She answered rapidly, and partly in Spanish. There was a good deal of womanly bitterness in her voice, but I could only gather a few hasty ejaculations.

"You joke, Mr. Turner—you mock—you have found a way of amusing yourself with the lone stranger. I know that you always hated us Spaniards, but you never mocked me in this way till now."

"There it is again," exclaimed the poor suitor. "I guessed how it would all turn out ; never did know how to manage one of the sex—never shall ! Look here, Maria, I'm in earnest—very much in earnest ; ask Lady Catherine—ask Zana if I'm not determined on it."

Turner gathered himself up, moved awkwardly enough toward Maria, and taking her hand looked at it wistfully, as if quite uncertain what to do next.

"I never kissed a woman's hand in my life," he said, desperately, "but I'll kiss yours, on my soul I will, if you'll just marry me without more ado."

She leaned heavily against the window, and said more temperately,

"Say, why have you asked this of me ?"

I do not know what Turner would have replied, for, obeying the impulse of the moment, I came forward, and before either of them were aware of my approach, stood in the room.

"Tell her the whole, dear Mr. Turner," I said, going up to Maria with a degree of reverence I had never felt for her before. "She ought to know it—she must know that you are asking her to marry you that Lady Catherine may not turn us all adrift on the world ; that the people may stop pointing at me because I have no father."

Maria flung her arms around me.

"There—there !" exclaimed Turner, moving toward the door, "you see I've done my best, Zana, and have got everybody

crying. Tell her yourself, child ; just arrange it between you ; call for me when all's ready ; what I say I stand to."

The old man writhed himself out of the room, leaving Maria and I together.

My good, *bonné* was greatly agitated, and besought me to explain the scene I had interrupted, but I could not well understand it myself. All I knew was, that this marriage had been demanded by Lady Catherine as a condition of our remaining in the house. I repeated, word for word, what I had gathered of the conversation between her and Turner, omitting only those expressions of reluctance that had escaped my benefactor. She listened attentively, but being almost a child, like myself, in English custom, could not comprehend why this necessity had arisen for any change in our condition.

"And do you hate Mr. Turner so much?" I said, breaking a fit of thoughtfulness into which she had fallen. "I thought you liked each other till now; don't, oh, my *bonné*, don't marry him if it troubles you so! You and I can get a living somehow without taking him from his place."

"Yes—two children—why, Zana, you know more of the world than I do. Where could we go?"

"I don't know, without Mr. Turner, what we should do," I answered, sadly.

"Without him, why, Zana—without him we should both die!"

"Oh, Maria, my *bonne*, if you could but like Mr. Turner, only a little, just enough to marry him, you know!" I exclaimed, amid my tears.

"Like him, Zana? I have had nothing but him and you in the world for years," she said, weeping.

"Then you do like him—you will marry him!" I exclaimed, full of joy.

She strained me to her bosom and kissed me in her old passionate way. I sprang from her arms the moment they were loosened, and ran off in search of Mr. Turner.

He was working in the garden, stamping the earth around a

young laburnum tree, which he had just planted, with a sort of ferocious vehemence, as if striving to work away some lingering irritation.

"Go in and speak with her now," I said, pulling his arm.

"No, I've made a fool of myself once, and that is enough!" he answered, shaking me off. "I didn't think any woman living could have driven me to it."

Still he moved toward the house.

That evening Mr. Turner was absent both from our cottage and the Hurst. He came back the next day with a portentous-looking paper, which he and Maria scanned over with great interest. When I asked regarding it, they told me, with a good deal of awkwardness, that it was a marriage license.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE JOVIAL WEDDING AND RANDOM SHOT.

Two or three mornings after this, I was sent over to the parsonage to spend the day with Cora. Maria took more than usual care in dressing me. I went forth in a white muslin dress, fluttering with rose-colored ribbons, quite too fairy-like for my usual morning visits to this my second home. But Cora was also floating about in clouds of white muslin, with glimpses of azure here and there about her arms and bosom, as if arrayed for some festival. How flowerlike was the style of her loveliness! Those ringlets of glossy gold; the violet eyes full of softness, downcast, and yet so brilliant when she smiled; the rounded arms, the neck and shoulders, white and satiny as when I first saw them by the spring; the little foot and hand, slender and rosy: all these points of beauty are before me this instant, vividly as if painted on canvas. There is

a reason why they should have sunk deep into my heart—a cruel reason which the hereafter will disclose.

Her father was in his clerical robes, walking up and down the little parlor gently, as he always moved, and with a soft smile on his lips, as if amusing himself with some odd fancy.

“Come in, my child,” he said, with a change of expression, brought on; I felt, by a more serious current of thought which my appearance suggested. “Come in—you will find Cora in her room.”

I paused, as was my habit, to kiss his hand in passing, but he detained me a moment, pressing his lips upon my forehead.

“God bless you,” he said, “and make you worthy of all that your friends are so willing to suffer in your behalf.”

I went away to Cora’s room. I have told you how very lovely she appeared in her pretty dress, but it is impossible to describe the graceful undulations of each movement, the bewitching softness of her smile ! My own olive complexion and deep bloom seemed coarse and rude beside her.

“And so you have come to the wedding,” she said, wreathing her arm around my waist, and drawing me before the little mirror at which she had been dressing. “Isn’t it a droll affair altogether ?”

“They are very kind, very good to me,” I replied, a little hurt by her air of ridicule.

“And to me !” was her laughing reply ; “this is the very first wedding I shall have seen. Isn’t it charming. The people will be here from Greenhurst ; the young heir, perhaps.”

Why did that spasm shoot through my heart so suddenly ? I was looking upon the reflection of Cora’s beauty. It was a lovely vision, but the color went from my own cheek as I gazed on hers, and that made the contrast between us strange and darker. I remembered that George Irving would look on that lovely vision also ; and the first sharp pang of jealousy known to my life tore its way through my bosom. I did not know what it was, but sickened under it as the grass withers beneath a Upas tree.

I struggled against myself, conscious that the feeling was wrong, though ignorant of its nature, but other thoughts mingled with these selfish ones. I was astonished and hurt that strangers should force themselves upon a ceremony which the parties desired to be private. It seemed rude and cruel to the last degree.

But I was called into the parlor. Turner and Maria were in sight quietly crossing the fields together without the least pretention. Maria looked nice and matronly in her dress of soft grey silk and cap of snowy lace ; Turner wore his ordinary suit of black, for he had long since flung off livery, and bore his usual business-like appearance. It was impossible to find anything to condemn in persons so free from affectation of any kind. For my part I was proud of my benefactors ; there was a respectability about them that no ridicule could reach.

We entered a little church, and found it already occupied by a large party of strangers, guests from Greenhurst. I saw Turner start and change color as he went in, but pressing his thin lips together till they were almost lost among his wrinkles, he walked firmly on, holding Maria by the hand.

I saw it all, I knew that he was suffering tortures from those impertinent people, and all for my sake. It seemed as if my presence would be some support to them ; and when Cora would have turned into a pew close to that occupied by Lady Catherine, I resisted and led her up to the altar.

There, on the very spot where Cora's mother had rested in her death sleep, Turner and Maria were married. I thought of all this, and it made my heart swell with unshed tears ; but Cora seemed to have forgotten it entirely. Her downcast eyes wandered sideways toward the intruders all the time. The two great mysteries of life, death and marriage, which we had witnessed, and were witnessing together by that altar stone, were driven from her mind.

The ceremony was over. Turner and his wife moved away, passing through the crowd with a serious dignity that would make itself respected. I would have followed close, but Cora

held back, keeping on a range with the intruders. Lady Catherine was directly before us, leaning upon the arm of an old gentleman I had seen in the hunt.

"Ah, Lady Catherine, your benign goodness is felt everywhere," he was saying. "It must have had an angel's power in reforming this old stoic!"

"Hush," said the lady, touching his arm with her gloved finger, "his daughter is just behind us!"

"What, the little Diana!" exclaimed the gentleman, looking over his shoulder. "I would give fifty pounds to see her again."

"She will hear you!" whispered the lady, impatiently.

"And who is the other little elf?" cried the old squire, whose admiration was not to be subdued. "Why, dear lady, you have a new race of fairies and goddesses springing up about Greenhurst. Take heed that my friend George is not made captive."

"I followed the old squire's look, and saw George Irving, with another young man, fairer and taller than himself, with their eyes riveted on Cora.

I remained with Cora all night. She was full of gleeful gossip about the wedding, and more than once spoke of the young gentleman who had looked at her so often. She did not say so admiringly, but I knew well the glow of vanity that led her thoughts that way, and the subject caused me unaccountable pain. I listened to her, therefore, with impatience, and while her beauty seemed more fascinating than ever, its brilliancy wounded me. It was a precocious and wrong feeling, I confess, but there were many passionate sensations in my heart even then, which some women live from youth to age and never know.

I was reluctant to go home—to meet Turner and Maria after the sacrifice and insult of the previous day. It seemed as if they must hate me for being the cause of it all. But deep in the morning, I put on my bonnet and prepared to return home. Cora proposed to go part way with me, and though I preferred

to be alone, she persisted with laughing obstinacy, and flinging a scarf over her head, ran after me down the garden.

I was very willing to loiter on the way, and we turned into the fields enjoying the soft autumn air, and searching for hazelnuts along the stone fences.

We came to a thicket where the fruit was abundant, and so ripe that we had but to shake the golden husks, and the nuts came rattling in showers around us. I clambered up the wall, and seizing a heavy branch from the thicket, showered the nuts into the pretty silk apron which Cora held up with both white hands.

I think in my whole life I never saw anything so lovely as she was at that moment. The blue scarf floated back upon the wind, circling her head as you see the drapery around one of Guido's angels; her eyes sparkled with merriment: and she shook back the curls from her face with a laugh, gleeful and mellow, as if she had fed on ripe peaches all her days.

"Stop, stop, you will smother me!" she shouted, gathering the apron in a heap, and holding up both hands to protect her curls from the shower of nuts that I was impetuously beating over her.

I paused, instantly, ashamed of the action, which had been unconscious as it was violent.

"Did the nuts hurt you?" I said, bending forward to address her.

"No, no; just a little when they struck my forehead: nothing more!" she said, still laughing, but with the rosy palm of her hand pressed to one temple that was slightly flushed.

That instant I heard the report of a fowling-piece close by, and a thrush fell, with a death shriek, down to the hazel thicket. It beat its wings about among the green leaves an instant, then fell heavily through, lodging at Cora's feet. Her laugh died away in a sob; the poor thing grew pale as death, and I saw with a shudder that two great drops of blood had fallen upon her neck.

She dropped the nuts from her apron, and sank down to the

earth. I sprang upright on the wall and looked around, excited and angry, for the shot had rattled against the very stones upon which I was seated.

"Great heavens! what is this? Are you hurt?" cried a voice, and I saw George Irving, with his young companion of the previous day, running toward us; while a fine pointer cleared the wall in search of the dead bird.

"I do not know; there is blood on Cora's neck, it may be only from the bird," I answered, leaping to the ground. "Cora, Cora, look up—are you hurt?"

I trembled from head to foot, and strove to lift her from the ground, for she made no answer. Some one cleared the wall with the leap of a deer and pushed me aside. I saw Cora lifted in the arms of a young man, and heard her begin to sob with hysterical violence.

"She is not hurt; it is not her blood!" he said, in a voice so calm, that though full of music, it grated on my ear, and with his cambric handkerchief he wiped the blood spots from her neck. "She is frightened a little, nothing more."

"Nothing more!" exclaimed Irving, passionately, "why, is not that enough, brigands that we are, to terrify the sweet child into this state!"

I felt myself growing cold from head to foot, for Irving had taken the weeping girl from her supporter, and held her gently in his own arms. She opened her eyes—those beautiful violet eyes—and a smile broke through the tears that filled them.

I grew faint, a mist crept around me, and I leaned against the wall for support. No one seemed to observe it, for I made no noise, and they were busy with her.

"I am glad that it is no worse; the leaves were so thick, and I looked only at the bird: Can you stand now? The blood is all away, nothing but a rosy glow on your neck is left to reproach us."

It was Irving's voice, and I could see dimly as through a mist that Cora still clung to him, and that he was looking into her eyes. Then I heard another voice, calm and caustic as if

feelings like my own lay at the bottom, suppressed but observant.

"In all this you overlook the real evil," it said, "don't you see, Irving, that while this child does not require so much care, the other is really suffering—nay, wounded?"

I felt a sharp pain in my arm, just above the elbow, as he spoke, forgotten till then in the more bitter pang at my heart; and through the mistiness that still crept over my eyes, I saw a slender stream of crimson trickling down and dropping from my fingers.

"She is hurt indeed—a shot has gone through her arm," exclaimed Irving, and I felt through every nerve that he had put Cora away from his support almost forcibly, and was close by me. Young as I was, the master feeling of my nature awoke then, and I started from the wall, dizzy and confused, but determined that he should not touch me.

"It is nothing," I said, winding my handkerchief around the arm, and turning haughtily away. "Come, Cora, shall we go?"

"Let me rest, Zana, I am so tired and frightened!" she said, and her beautiful eyes filled again.

Irving's face flushed crimson as I repulsed his offered support, and though the look with which he regarded me was regretful, it was proud too. When Cora spoke in her sweet pleading way, he bent his eyes upon her with an expression of relief, but turned to me again.

"It is an accident; you cannot suppose I wounded you on purpose," he said, pleadingly. "Why are you so unforgiving?"

"There is nothing to forgive," was my cold answer.

"You are wounded! Is that nothing?"

"It is nothing; and if it were, the wound was not intended for me."

He looked at me earnestly, as if pained and embarrassed by the manner with which I received his apologies; then he turned toward Cora.

"I hope my friend is not mistaken—that I have not injured you also."

"No," replied Cora, casting her eyes to the ground and blushing. "I was terrified ; the feeling of blood : fear for Zana made me tremble, but I am not hurt."

"Thank heaven !" exclaimed young Irving, and gathering up her azure scarf, he dropped it lightly over the shining gold of her hair. I watched him with burning indignation. His gentle interest in Cora, who was all unharmed, seemed a mockery to the stinging pain of my arm. I forgot how coldly I had received his sympathy, and like all impulsive but proud natures, fancied that he must read my feelings, not my actions, and judged him by the fancy.

"I must go home now, the morning is almost gone !" I said to Cora. "Are you well enough to move on ?"

"No, I tremble yet," she said sweetly ; "your wound pains me more than it does yourself, Zana, it has taken away all my strength."

"Then I will go alone," was my curt rejoinder. "My arm bleeds."

I started suddenly, and almost ran toward home.

Directly I heard a light step following me.

"This is unkind, cruel !" said Irving, pleading ; "let me help you ?"

The pride of my heart was subdued ; I relaxed the speed with which I had moved, and listened with a thrill of grateful pleasure.

"You smile—your color comes back, thanks !" he said, gaily.

I could not answer. The sweet sensations that overwhelmed me were too exquisite for words.

"You will not speak to me," said Irving, stooping forward to look in my face.

My eyes met his, I felt the lids drooping over them, and, spite of myself, began to tremble with delicious joy. Like a cup full of honey, my heart overflowed with sighs, but I could neither speak nor look him in the face. Did he understand it all ? Did he read in my face all that was making a heaven in

my heart? All I know is, that he grew silent like myself, and we moved on together through the soft atmosphere like two young creatures in a dream. At length some obstacle arose in our path. I know not how it was, but we paused and looked at each other. My eyes did not droop then, but were fascinated by the deep, earnest tenderness that filled his. I met that gaze, and kept it forever in my soul, the most solemn and beautiful memory ever known to it.

“Zana, do you love me?”

The question fell upon my ear like a whisper of expected music. I had listened for it with hushed breath, for with the soft atmosphere of love all around me, it came naturally as lightning in a summer cloud. I think he repeated the question twice before the joy at my heart sprang with a deep, delicious breath to my lips.

“Zana, do you love me?”

“Do I love you? Yes, oh, yes!”

As the words left my soul, a calm, solemn contentment brooded down like a dove upon it. The feeling was too holy and sweet for blushes. It seemed to me as if I had partaken of an angel's nature while uttering it. Up to that moment I had never dwelt upon the thought of love, save as a pleasant household feeling. The passion of love I did not even then comprehend, notwithstanding it beat in every pulse of my warm southern blood.

He took my hand, holding it with a firm, gentle pressure, and thus we walked on softly and still as the summer air moves among the daisies. I can imagine Adam and Eve walking thus in Paradise, when the temptation first crept across their path. I can imagine them starting at the evil thing, as we did when Irving's tutor came suddenly upon us. He was a sweet-voiced, quiet man some ten years older than Irving, and a great favorite with Lady Catherine. I did not like his manners, they were fawning and yet cold—his very humility was oppressive.

“You walk slowly,” he said, in his calm, silky way; “no wonder, it is a delightful morning.”

Irving tightened his grasp on my hand.

"You can find the way home now," he said, dropping it and turning away with his tutor.

"Nay, this is ungallant, Irving," said that person, moving toward me ; "you forget her arm seems hurt."

"Yes, I had forgotten it," was the reply, and he came back. "Can you forgive me !"

I, too, had forgotten it.

"There is no pain left," was my answer. "Go away with him, he troubles me."

"And me !" was the murmured reply.

They went away together, leaving me alone with my great happiness.

It is said that love gives beauty to all material things. It may be so with others, but to me nature looked faded and insignificant that day. I longed for a rainbow in the skies ; for a carpet of blossoms under my feet ; for the breath of roses in every gush of air. Nothing but heaven could have matched the beautiful joy of my soul.

For three days my rich contentment lasted. During that time I scarcely seemed to have a mortal feeling. When fancy could sustain itself no longer, came the material want of his presence. My heart had fed upon its one memory over and over again. Now it grew hungry for fresh certainties. I began to think of the future, to speculate and doubt. Why had he kept away ? Where was he now ? Had I been dreaming—only dreaming ?

I did not observe Turner and Maria in their new relations. At another time their awkward tenderness and shy love-making would have amused me, but now I scarcely remarked it, and in their embarrassment they forgot to notice me.

Perhaps they would have detected nothing remarkable had they been ever so vigilant, for I was self-centred in my own happiness, and joy like mine was too deep and dreamy for easy detection.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

MY FIRST VISIT TO GREENHURST—THE TWO MINIATURES.

ON the third day, Lady Catherine sent for me to come up to the Hurst. It seems she was resolved to carry out her plan of giving me such accomplishments as I could pick up, without expense, from her son's tutor, and her own waiting-maid.

I went, not without a pang of wounded pride, but too happy in the hope of seeing him again, for thought of much else. Lady Catherine was in her dressing-room, and several ladies, whom I afterward learned were guests from London, had joined her, it seems, curious to see the wild wood-nymph who had made a sensation at the hunt.

Lady Catherine half rose from her silken lounge as I entered, and motioned me to sit down on an embroidered ottoman, first lifting from it a little tan-colored spaniel, which she settled beside her on the couch. I sat down, with a burning forehead, for it was easy to see that she placed me and the dog on an equal level, if indeed the animal did not meet with higher estimation than the human pet.

"Isn't she a spirited, wild little beauty?" she said, addressing a young girl some two years older than myself, perhaps, who was busy working seed-pearls into a bit of embroidery.

The young lady looked coldly up, and, after scanning me from head to foot, dropped her eyes again, murmuring something about my being older than she had supposed. Lady Catherine drew her hand down the folds of my hair, exclaiming at its thickness and lustre, just as she had handled the silky ears of her King Charles a moment before.

"Did you ever see anything so long and so raven black," she

said, uncoiling a heavy braid from around my head, and holding it up at full length.

"That sort of hair is often seen in persons of mixed blood," answered the young lady, without lifting her eyes, "long, but of a coarser texture. I must confess black is not my favorite color."

"You must take an interest in this poor child—indeed you must, Estelle ; I have quite depended on it—she will be quick to learn : won't you, child ? Let her look over some of your drawings, Estelle. I dare say she never saw anything like them in her life !"

The young lady kept at her work, not seeming to relish the idea of amusing a creature so disagreeable as she evidently found me. Lady Catherine arose ; she spoke to the young girl in a subdued voice, but not a syllable escaped me.

"Nay, love, you must. It will please George more than anything ; besides, I promised as much to her father in order to induce him to abandon that horrid way of life. It is quite a moral duty to civilize the child, now that the parents are married ; George looks upon it in this light, I assure you."

"I would do anything to please him, you know," said the girl, half sullenly, "but he never sees my efforts ; never cares for them."

"Who should know, dearest, but the mother who is his confidant ?" was the caressing reply. "How can you doubt what I tell you ?"

"Well," replied the girl, rising, "let the child come to my dressing-room !"

"No, love," interposed Lady Catherine ; "bring them here—I never weary of them myself."

The young lady withdrew, and returned with a richly embroidered portfolio crowded full of drawings. She spread them out upon a table, and haughtily motioned me to approach.

The drawings were evidently copies highly finished, but variable as if more than one pencil had performed its part there.

My quick intuition told me this at a glance, and I looked into the girl's face with a feeling of scorn which doubtless spoke in my features. She probably held me in so much contempt that my look was unnoticed, for she continued to turn over the drawings with haughty self-possession, as if quite careless of any opinion I might form.

At last we came to a head sketched with care, and evidently an attempt at some likeness.

"Do you know that?" said Estelle, "probably you have never seen Mr. Irving."

"I have seen Mr. Irving," was my answer, "but this is not in the least like him."

"Perhaps you could draw a better one!" she said, casting a sneering smile toward Lady Catherine, but with rising color, as if she were a good deal vexed.

"Perhaps," I answered very quietly.

"Try," said the haughty girl, taking a pencil and some paper from a pocket of the port-folio.

I took the pencil, dropped on one knee by the table, and, excited by her sneers into an attempt that I should have held almost sacrilegious at another time, transferred a shadow of the image that filled my soul to the paper. I felt the look of haughty astonishment with which the young patrician bent over me as I worked out the quick inspiration.

"What is she doing?" inquired Lady Catherine, gliding toward the table. "Why, Estelle, you seem entranced."

Estelle drew proudly back, and pointed toward me with a sneering lift of the upper lip, absolutely hateful.

"You have found a prodigy here, madam, nothing less," she said; "what a memory the creature must have to draw like that with only one sight of your son's face!"

Lady Catherine bent over me, and I felt that she breathed unequally, like one conquering an unpleasant surprise.

"What an impression that one interview must have made," persisted the young lady.

"I have seen Mr. Irving more than once or twice," I answered, without pausing in the rapid touches of my pencil, though my heart beat loud and fast as I spoke.

"Indeed," sneered the girl with a glance at Lady Catherine.

"Indeed!" repeated that lady, with forced unconcern; "the child wanders among the trees like a bird, Estelle, you have no idea what a wild gipsy it is; we must civilize her between us."

"Is Mr. Irving to help? It looks like that," answered Estelle, spitefully.

"Is there anything in which I can be of service?" said a voice that made the heart leap in my bosom; but so perfect was my self-control that I finished the shadow upon which I was at work mechanically, as if every nerve in my system were not thrilling like the strings of an instrument.

"We were speaking about humanizing this strange child a little," said Lady Catherine; "she really has a good deal of originality, as we were saying, and Estelle is quite charmed with the idea of bringing it out."

My soul was full of scornful ridicule. I felt it breaking up through my eyes, and curving my lip as I looked from Estelle to George Irving. His own face caught the spirit, and he met my glance with a bright smile of intelligence, that others read as well as myself.

"Did you ever try to teach music to a woodlark, dear mother?" he said, stooping down to look at the head I had sketched.

My heart stood still, but I would not permit myself to blush; on the contrary, there was a dry, cold feeling about my lips as if the blood were leaving them; but my gaze was fascinated. I could not turn it from his face, and when the warm crimson rushed up over his brow and temples, as the likeness struck him, my breath was absolutely stopped. I would have given the universe for the power of obliterating my own work from the paper and from his brain. There was anger, reproach, and a dash of scorn in the glance which he turned from the likeness

to my face. I trembled from head to foot. The lids drooped like lead over the shame that burned in my eyes; a feeling that he thought my act indelicate scorched me like a fire.

"The likeness does not seem to please you, Mr. Irving," said Estelle, and her face brightened. "In my humility I had supposed it better than my poor attempt."

"Oh, it was only a copy, then!" he cried, laughing, and the cloud left his face; "this is your first lesson, and my poor features the subject. You honor them too much; pray whose selection was it?"

"I believe my sketch gave rise to the other," answered Estelle, casting down her fine eyes, and certainly mistaking the feelings she had excited.

"I am glad of it," answered Irving, and the glow of his countenance bore proof of his sincerity.

"Now," said Lady Catherine, in her usual way, which with all its softness had authority in it, "let us settle things for the morning. We visit Marston Court; Estelle has never been thoroughly over the house; of course you go, George."

He did not seem embarrassed, but thoughtful, and, after a moment's consideration, replied, "Yes, I will escort you on horseback. Who are going?"

The guests were enumerated. Most of the names I had never heard before. My own was not in the list.

"And Zana!" said Irving, with a slight rise of color when his mother paused.

"Oh, Zana, she will find amusement for herself. She has never seen the house yet—besides, as your tutor remains behind, he can take the opportunity to give her a lesson or two."

Lady Catherine looked furtively at her son as she made the proposition. His brow clouded, and his lips were set together very resolutely; but his voice was low and respectful as he replied,

"Not so, madam! Unless in your presence, that gentleman is not a proper person to teach a girl like Zana!"

"Dear me, you are really making the thing a burden. How

can you expect all these formalities, George, in a case like this—and me with nerves worn down to a thread?”

“I will teach her myself,” was the firm reply, though rays of crimson shot across his forehead as he spoke.

“You, George?—preposterous!”

“Why preposterous, madam?”

“Your youth!”

“Is my tutor old?”

“Your position—your prospects!”

He laughed in a gay, light fashion.

“Well, should my Uncle Clare marry again, a thing not unlikely, exercise of this kind will be a useful experience, for then I shall have little but my brains to depend on.”

“But he will never marry!—who thinks it?” cried the mother impatiently.

“Men of a little more than forty do not often consider themselves out of the matrimonial market, mother.”

“You talk wildly, George. Clare will never marry again—never, never!”

“And if he does not, am I his next heir?—or my hopes of advancement and fortune rest on you, lady mother?—you who certainly will not own yourself too old for a second marriage!”

“This is nonsense, George!”

“No, sober truth; my uncle—whom heaven preserve, for he is a good man—could aid me nothing in his death. *You* would inherit, not your son; the ladies of our line are a privileged race.”

“But are you not my only son and heir?”

“True again; and your favorite while I do not offend.”

“That you will never do,” answered the mother, with a glow of feeling in her voice.

“I hope not, mother,” he said, lifting her hand to his lips with an expression of earnest affection. “But do not talk to me of expectations that may be dreams; and rank that may find me, when it comes, a broken-hearted old man!”

"This is strange talk, George, and in this presence. Estelle will learn to look upon your prospects with distrust."

"She, with all my friends, will do well to think of me only as I am, the dependent of a good uncle, certain of nothing but a firm will, good health, and an honest purpose !" he answered, glancing, not at the haughty patrician, but at me.

"And that is enough for any man," I exclaimed, filled with enthusiasm by his proud frankness. "What inheritance does he require but that honest, firm will, which cleaves its own way in the world ? Oh, how the soul must enjoy the blessings which its own strength has had the power to win. If I were a man, neither gold nor rank should detract from my native strength. I would go into the world and wrestle my way through, not for the wealth or the power that might come of it—but for the strength it would give to my own nature—the development—the refining process of exertion—the sense of personal power. In that must lie all the true relish of greatness !"

The guests had one by one glided from Lady Catherine's room before her son came in, and no one listened to our conversation but her ladyship and the girl Estelle. When I ceased speaking, Lady Catherine sunk among the cushions of her couch, lifting the dog to her bosom as if she feared my rash words would poison the creature ; while her young friend stood close by with both arms folded scornfully over her bosom, gazing at me from her open eyes, as if there had been something wicked in my expression. For myself, the moment my rash enthusiasm gave way, all courage went with it ; and before the fire had left my eyes they were full of tears.

"Is the creature mad, or a sibyl ?" said Lady Catherine, in a voice that went through and through me.

"Mother," said her son, pale as death, but with a strange glory of expression in his face—"need you ask again whose blood spoke there ?"

He addressed her in a whisper, but she turned white, and

lifted her finger to check his further speech, glancing at Estelle.

"Strange language this for the daughter of a servant!" exclaimed Estelle, her bosom heaving with scornful astonishment.

"I am not the daughter of a servant," was the reply that sprang to my lips; "the story is a falsehood. Turner is my benefactor, my more than father: *not* my father; but if he were, why should my words, if right, not spring from the lips of *his* child? Are all gifts reserved for the patrician? Does not the great oak and the valley lily spring from exactly the same soil? Thank heaven there is no monopoly in thought!"

"In heaven's name, who taught you these things?" cried Lady Catherine, aghast.

"Who teaches the flowers to grow, and the fruit to ripen?" I answered, almost weeping, for my words sprang from an impulse, subtle and evanescent as the perfume of a flower; and like all sensitive persons I shrunk from the remembrance of my own mental impetuosity.

"Really, your ladyship, you must excuse me, this is getting tiresome," said Estelle, sweeping from the room; "I fear with all your goodness the child will prove a troublesome pet."

Lady Catherine sat among her cushions very white, and with a glitter in her eyes that I had learned to shrink from.

"Irving," she said, speaking to him in a low but firm voice, "plead with me no more—she must and shall leave the estate."

"Madam, she is but a child!"

"A mischievous one, full of peril to us all, and therefore, to be disposed of at once. Out of my own income I will provide for her wants, but away from this place—in another land, perhaps."

I felt myself growing pale, and saw that Irving was also greatly agitated. He looked at me reproachfully, and muttered, "imprudent—imprudent." I went to a window, and leaning against the frame, stood patiently, and still as marble, waiting for my sentence. Again my rashness had perilled all that

I loved ; the thought froze me through and through ; I hated myself. Irving was talking to his mother ; she had forgotten dignity, her elegance, everything in her indignation against me. At last I caught some of his words. They were deep and determined.

"No, mother, I will not consent. If our suspicions are true, and I must confess every day confirms them in my estimation—the course you propose would be impolitic as cruel. You cannot keep her existence from Lord Clare ; all that we guess he will soon learn. He is just, noble—think if he would forgive this persecution of—of an orphan—for she is that if nothing more !"

"But am I to be annoyed—braved, talked down by a child, and before my own guests ?" said the mother. "Who knows the mischief she has already done with Estelle ?"

"Mother, I beseech you, let that subject drop. It is a dream."

"One of the best matches in England, my son ; a golden dream worth turning to reality."

"No, mother, in this I must be free."

"Perhaps you are not free ! That child !"

They were looking in each other's eyes, the mother and son reading thoughts there that each would gladly have concealed from the other. I came forward.

"Madam, let me go home, I am not fit for this place. Let me return, and I will trouble you no more."

"I wish to heaven it were possible for you to keep this promise, girl."

"Let me go home ; send for me no more ; I will never willingly cross your path again."

"Nor his ?" said the mother, fixing her cold eyes on my face, and pointing to her son.

"Madam, I beseech you, let me go."

"But I have promised Turner to educate you."

"Lady, you cannot. Mr. Clarke has taken great care of me, and in some shape I have educated myself."

"You are a strange girl."

"I feel strange here. May I go?"

She fell into thought with her eyes on my face, as if it had been a work of marble.

"Yes," she said, at length, "go, but I feel that we have not done with each other. Now, George, equip at once; we have kept our guests waiting!"

"No, mother, I cannot go to Marston Court; make my excuses!"

He went out, leaving no time for a rejoinder; and Lady Catherine followed. I was alone in the room.

All at once a strange sensation came over me. I looked around with a vague feeling of dread. Things that I had not before noticed were strangely familiar. It seemed as if I were in a dream, and without volition, and without object, I crossed the room toward a small antique cabinet that stood in one corner. The lids were deeply carved and set heavily with jewels. It is a solemn truth, I was unconscious of the act, but unclosing the cabinet reached forth my hand, and opened a small, secret drawer that was locked with a curious spring.

Among other trinkets, two locketts of gold lay within the drawer; one shaped like a shell, and paved thickly with pearls; the other plain, and without ornament of any kind. I took up the shell, and it sprung open in my hand, revealing two faces that seemed like something that had floated in my dreams years ago. One was that of a man in the first proud bloom of youth, with a brow full of lofty thought, but fair and of a delicate whiteness that we seldom see beyond infancy. The lips and the deep blue eyes seemed smiling upon me, and with a pang of love, for it was half pain, I kissed it. The female face I *could not look upon*. It seemed to me like the head of an evil spirit that was to haunt my destiny, and yet it possessed a wonderful fascination to me.

I laid the shell down, and with a sort of mysterious awe took up the other locket. It opened with difficulty, and when I wrenched the spring apart, it seemed as if my very soul had

received a strain. It was a miniature also. I looked upon it, and the claw of some fierce bird seemed clutched upon my bosom and throat. It appeared to me as if I struggled minutes and minutes in its gripe ; then the pressure gave way, and with a burst of tears I cried out, " the face !—the face !"

A thin hand was thrust over my shoulder and snatched the locket away. I turned and saw it in the grasp of Lady Catherine. With a choking cry my hands were flung out, and I leaped madly upward striving to snatch it.

" Would you steal ? Are you a thief ?" she cried, grasping the locket tight, and holding it on high. " Would you steal ? Are you a thief ?"

The words went hissing through my ear. A hot flush of indignant shame clouded my sight, and I saw George Irving, as it were, through waves of crimson gauze, looking sternly upon me.

Then all grew black and still as death.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

SORROWS, DOUBTS AND CONJECTURES.

THE cold dash of water on my face aroused me, and I awoke gasping for breath as if my very soul had felt the icy deluge. Only one person remained in the room, and he was so white that it seemed like waking among the dead. A heavy weight still rested on my brain, and after a struggle or two I felt myself sinking as one falls from some precipice in a dream. All at once it appeared to me that I had been pulled back with violence. My lips burned as if a handful of thorns had been drawn across them, and again my heavy eyelids were lifted. Lady Catherine had entered the room. It was the antipathy

of our natures that dragged me violently back from unconsciousness. Instantly the pang of remembrance returned, and its agony gave me strength to hear but not to move.

"Is she conscious yet?" said Lady Catherine, touching me with the point of her satin slipper.

"She has moved a little," answered a voice, so deep and sorrowful that my heart stood still to listen.

"Let something be done; I am sick of her! Burn feathers, bring aromatic vinegar—why, is no servant at hand?"

"You would not expose the poor child thus to our servants, mother?" was the reply.

"The poor child, indeed! George, George, this is too much! Yes, I would expose her to the lowest scullion about the place—poor child! The thief!—the"——

"Mother!"

My heart leaped at the stern rebuke conveyed in this single word. I broke through the leaden feeling that held me motionless and rose to my feet, reeling and half blind, but stung into life by the epithet that unwomanly lady had applied to me.

"Madam," I said, striving to sweep the mist from my eyes with one hand—"madam, you are false, body and soul. You know that I could not steal the picture of my own mother. God gives to every child a mother. Who shall say that the shadow of mine can belong to any one else; or, if it did, that I might not look at it?"

She interrupted me with a bitter laugh, in sickening contrast with her usual hollow-hearted loftiness.

"The picture of *your* mother, and in Lord Clare's escritoir!" she exclaimed; "upon my word, George, this impudence is sublime."

"It *was* my mother!" I answered firmly, but with a swelling heart. "Mr. Irving, you believe me."

I reached forth my hand to the young man, and he took it—held it—pressed his cold lips upon it, and thus proclaimed the noble trust that was in him, while she looked on.

"Mother!" and the words burst like fire through his white

lips—"mother, I do believe the child innocent as God's angels!"

These words bereft me of all strength. My limbs gave way as if they had been moulded from snow. I fell at his feet, and winding my arms about his knees, gave myself up to a passion of tears.

"George Irving, undo the coil of that serpent, spurn her away, or henceforth you are no child of mine!" burst on my ears.

I saw that wicked glare of her eyes, the white rage that shook her from head to foot. There was something horrid in this fiendish rage in a mother, and addressed to her only child. I took away my arms and arose.

"Madam, calm yourself," I said gently, for his faith had filled my soul with solemn peace, "I shall touch him no more—see him, probably, never again. You can separate us, but I know that he believes me—it is enough!"

I left the room without another word or look, and went home.

Two days after, Greenhurst was deserted. Lady Catherine and her son, with some of their guests, had departed for the Continent. He went without a word, but had I not given him up proudly, there in the presence of his mother?

Days, weeks, months rolled on, and after this terrible excitement my outer life became a dead calm; my intellect, for once, seemed to have lost its spring, and gave itself up to dreams. For a long time my faith in Irving remained firm; and though we never received a syllable from him, it seemed every day as if I had obtained some confirmation of his love; and I solemnly believe that no doubt would ever have arisen in my mind, but that the poison was sown there by another.

Those who know how sensibly a proud heart shrinks from the idea that even a suspicion of crime can attach to it, will not think it strange that I never mentioned the scene at Greenhurst to Turner or Maria; nor the fact that I had found and recognized a picture of my mother.

When the family left Greenhurst, young Moreton, his college mate and friend, remained at the old mansion with Mr. Upham, who had up to this time been the tutor of both. The intimacy that existed between these young men arose from the peculiar relations that Moreton held toward the family. But for the will which left Marston Court, with other property, to Lady Jane, who afterward became the wife of Lord Clare, this young man would have inherited everything that the old London banker possessed, for he was his nephew and sole relative. Thus he was in truth the natural heir of Marston Court and all the wealth that had devolved on the earl by the sudden death of his bride. Lord Clare left the country too much afflicted for any thought of the wrong that had been done this young man, but he had written to make liberal provision for his support and education, placing him in all respects on a level with his own nephew; and there was no just doubt that on Lord Clare's return to England, a portion at least of the inheritance that had been swept from his hands by the fondness of an old man for his wife, would be restored to him.

With this just expectation, Henry Moreton remained at Greenhurst, with the tutor, who had always been a greater favorite with Lady Catherine than with the young men themselves. Indeed, it was by her arrangement that these two persons, so unequal in character, were left at the Hurst.

Cora and I sometimes met young Moreton and his tutor in our rambles, and occasionally they came for an hour to the parsonage; but my preoccupation and a certain consciousness of the shame that had been put upon me by his benefactress, forbade that degree of intimacy with Moreton that might naturally have sprung up between young persons thrown so much together. But I hardly gave Moreton thought enough to comprehend the very noble and beautiful traits of character which, with one drawback, were in every way estimable. He was very unlike Irving, with his prompt courage, his impetuous feelings, and generous forgetfulness of self. Sensitive, and at times almost timid, Moreton possessed few of those qualities

that inspire enthusiasm in a proud young heart like mine. The extreme refinement and delicacy of his person and features sometimes aroused my admiration; but in everything he was so unlike my own idol, that I gave him nothing more than a kindly place in my regard. As for Cora, she seldom spoke to him. Though cheerful with every one else in his presence, she became demure and thoughtful, like a bird with its wings folded.

But Mr. Upham was not a man to awake measured feelings of this kind.

There certainly do exist persons endowed with intuitions so keen that they seem gifts of prophecy, and guard the soul, which but for them would be bruised and trampled under foot by the rude multitude. Are these feelings the thoughts of our guardian angels, the golden spears with which they hedge us in from harm? I know not, but it is certain no evil-minded being ever came near me that I did not feel a thrill of repulsion, certainly as light springs from flame.

True to this inward monitor, I never really liked this mild, self-possessed tutor. In spite of his silky manners, my heart always rose against him. It certainly seemed like a prejudice, and I often tried to reason it away. No human being could be kinder than this man; there was nothing noisy or unpleasant about him; indeed, there existed persons who found his humility and deferential silence more attractive than the warm-hearted sincerity of young Irving; but I was not among them.

Nothing but the sensitive dislike that I felt for this man, would have enabled me to understand the stealthy and subtle advances which he made to obtain my regard. But though I could not read his motive for wishing to interest a creature isolated like myself, there was no mistaking his pertinacious endeavors. Still he never spoke out; never, to use a worldly term, committed himself in words, thus keeping my frank nature at a disadvantage. There was no discouraging a man who expressed himself only in tones, sighs and glances. But to a heart wholly given up to another, there is nothing so repulsive

as the covert attentions that hint at love, which you never have the opportunity of receiving or crushing with a word.

At another time I might not have noticed Mr. Upham so closely, but in the listless state which follows the reaction of strong excitement, I was fit only for observation and thoughtfulness; besides, the fact that this man had been so long intimate with Irving, gave him a sort of painful fascination for me. Heart and brain I was a precocious girl, and the vigilance of my observation might have befitted an older and wiser person. Still I could not read him. Why did he wish to interest me? Why was he constantly talking of me to Turner, and putting Maria under cross-questions like a lawyer? Why, above all, was he so cold toward Cora, she, so strangely beautiful, so full of rustic coquetry, that a stoic must have yielded to her graceful beauty?

I had the discernment to see all that suggested these questions, but lacked the power to answer them.

It seemed to me, at times, that Cora felt and shared my dislike; but after the events that followed Turner's wedding, the entire confidence that existed between us was, to a degree, broken off. I never made her a confidant in those feelings that filled my whole nature, and really regarded her as too much of a child, notwithstanding our years were nearly the same, for any curiosity regarding her girlish fancies or prejudices.

Still, after a time, I could not fail to see that a change of some kind had fallen upon her. More than once I observed that her eyes were heavy as with crushed tears, and that shadows lay under them sometimes for days together; but she always burst into such passions of mocking gaiety when I grew anxious about the cause, that I was overwhelmed by it.

As the second year of Irving's absence crept on, my heart grew heavy with anxiety; I became suspicious of his faith, restless, unhappy beyond my powers of explaining. I can now trace back these feelings to looks, hints, and disjointed questions, dropped, from time to time, by Upham, with a point that stung like drops of venom, and yet with a seeming carelessness

that had all the force of truth. But then I suffered greatly without knowing from what source the distrust and anguish came.

One thing is very certain, the forced presence of this man, his incessant attentions, accompanied with so much perseverance, served to keep my sweet Cora at a distance from me that was painful ; but I could not force my pride to ask an explanation. No sister ever more truly loved another than I loved her. There was but one thing on earth I would not have sacrificed to her, and that was so much dearer than my own soul, I could have parted with one easily as the other.

Thus, as I have said, two years went by. Then news came that Lady Catherine and her son would soon be at Greenhurst. Mr. Upham gave me this intelligence one night when I was returning from the parsonage, where I had left Cora in a state of sadness that pained me, but of which she would give no explanation. "He was going that way in order to meet me," he said, and turned back in his usual quiet fashion as if to escort me home. His eyes were fixed searchingly on my face as he proclaimed his errand, and I felt that he was keenly reading my countenance.

But I had a strong will, and though the blood leaped in my heart at the thought of seeing Irving again, it did not reach my cheek or disturb a tone of my voice.

"They will be welcome," I said ; "the place is but little changed."

"You are forgiving as an angel," he answered. "That last scene with Lady Catherine would have left any other heart full of bitterness."

"And who told you of that scene?" I questioned sharply, and with a burning sense of shame.

"Who? George Irving, of course. It sent him abroad a whole year before the time allotted to him."

"And he told you this?"

"Certainly, why not? Did you suppose me merely Irving's tutor?" he answered, with a strange smile.

"Why, what else are you?" I demanded.

"His friend—his confidant."

Something in his manner put me upon my guard that evening, and I was disinclined to continue the conversation; but he was not a man to be evaded in anything. He followed up the subject with pertinacity, and every time Irving's name was mentioned I felt his eyes penetrating to my very thoughts. As we entered the park, I was about to turn down an avenue that led to my home, but he laid one hand on my arm and gently detained me.

"Zana," he said, "listen to me—for one moment throw off this haughty reserve. It chills me—it is cruel, for you know that I love you—love you, Zana, as man never loved woman. Now before our little Eden is broken up by these haughty Clares—now, while I have you all to myself, let me say it!"

I looked at him in amazement. The words he had spoken seemed like sacrilege; for, to a heart that really loves, there is a sort of profanity in expressions of passion from other than the true lips.

"Zana—Zana, you are ice—you are marble—my words freeze you—this is no answer to love like mine."

"You have said truly," I answered. "Ice, marble, anything hard and cold is all the reply that I can give—and it is fitting, for you love me no more than I love you."

The man turned white and stammered forth,

"You—you wrong me. Without love why should any man seek to make you his wife?"

"True," I answered stung by his words—"true, there is something here quite incomprehensible, but it is not love."

He broke into a passionate torrent of protestations, wrung my hand in his, and even attempted to throw his arms around me; but I retreated from him in dismay.

"You will not believe me," he said, standing in my path pale and breathless. "You will not even believe that I love you?"

"No, I do not believe it!"

"Who—who has poisoned your ear against me? Not that canting priest; not—not"—

"No one has ever uttered a word against you in my presence," I replied.

"Perhaps not, but you are so positive—you may have been impressed with some evil belief against me."

"No, I have never thought of the matter."

"Then you are truly indifferent?"

"I am, indeed!"

"You have no regard for my feeling—no gratitude for the love that I have lavished upon you so long. There is a cause for this, and that cause is your love for George Irving."

He looked at me with malicious scrutiny, but I had expected this, and my cheek remained cool as if he had passed an ordinary compliment.

"Inscrutable child," he muttered, "will nothing reach you?"

"You are right," I answered, without heeding his muttered comment. "It is my love for George Irving that makes me look upon all that you express as a wrong done to him, a mockery of the true feeling that lives in my heart, as rich wine fills a cup to the brim, leaving no space for a drop less pure than itself."

Oh, how my soul shrunk from the smile which he turned upon me.

"Can you, vain girl—can you, for a moment, think that *he* loves you?—you whom his uncle abandons and his mother denounces?"

The blood burned in my cheeks and temples hotly enough now, but I answered proudly,

"My thoughts like my affections are my own, I refuse to share them."

He smiled again, derisively.

"It is this wild dream that makes you so haughty. Dream on—I can wait!—when you awake, my homage may not seem so paltry."

He left me abruptly, and for many minutes I stood watching

his dusky form as it wound slowly in and out among the chestnuts. There was something serpent-like about his progress that made me thoughtful.

Why had this man sought me? Not from love, of that I was assured. Was there anything in my last scene with Lady Catherine, with which he had become acquainted, to arouse feelings of ambition or interest in a nature like his? If not, where was I to seek an explanation of his strange love-making? Now, for the first time, for hitherto my pride had kept on the outskirts of the question, I asked myself plainly why the picture of that haunting face—the face, which, without proof, I knew to be that of my mother—why it should have been found in Lord Clare's desk?

With this question came others that made my heart quail and my cheek burn. Memories thronged upon me—Lady Catherine's words as she urged Turner's marriage—the half uttered sentences of George Irving—the bitter dislike which his mother evidently felt for me; all these things crowded upon my brain so close that conviction came like lightning flashes. I was Lord Clare's illegitimate child. My mother—great heavens, how the thought of that face in all its heavenly beauty burned in my brain! Amid sobs and tears, and a bitter, bitter sense of degradation, my soul drew a black veil over it, and turned away from a remembrance of its loveliness.

I could not follow up the subject. Indeed, Mr. Upham was overwhelmed in the feelings that rushed upon me. I forgot to question his motives—forgot him—everything in the desolation of my shame.

I went home, but asked no questions either of Turner or his wife. They could have explained nothing that I did not fully comprehend, and my soul shrunk from the idea of speaking out its shame in words.

Now all rest forsook me. I had a craving wish to know everything—to penetrate into the centre of my parents' secret, but felt all the time that it was useless, as painful to inquire.

The whole history was locked up in my own soul. I felt its weight there, but the struggle to drag it forth strained my whole being to no avail.

Then my conjectures began, as at first, to wander over that which was probable. Could George Irving continue to love a creature so disgraced—a wretched offshoot from his own proud ancestral tree? And if he did, where was the end, marriage? No, no, my own pride rose up in defence of his! Where, then? Oh, how dead my heart lay as I asked the question.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE HAZELNUT HEDGE.

IN a week Lady Catherine and her son arrived, but I had lost all desire to see them. Turner found no difficulty now in persuading me to keep in-doors. But George never sought me. I knew that Greenhurst rang with gaiety; that Estelle Canfield, with many other fair patricians, was filling its stately rooms with mirth and beauty, but I was forgotten. It seemed to me at times, that my heart would break. The roundness melted from my limbs; the bloom was slowly quenching itself on my cheeks; my orphanage had never been complete till then.

But Cora was left to me—the pet and darling of my life. I was still the same to her, and she was more gentle and more lovely than ever. To my surprise, the return of company to Greenhurst made little impression upon her. The girlish curiosity and excitement which had formerly annoyed me seemed extinguished in her nature. Indeed she became rather more sad than usual; and I often found her sitting alone, and so still, under the cypress tree, where her father had leaned on that funeral day.

It did not seem strange to me, this quiet sadness, thus har-

monizing with the sorrow that dashed all joy from my own life. At another time I should have remarked it, but now it appeared natural as night tears do to the violet.

To Mr. Clarke I sometimes opened a leaf of my heart ; but only to reveal the shadows that lay there, in abstract musings and mournful questions. At such times he soothed me with his sweet, Christian counsel, that left tears like dew upon every blossom of my nature. Thus I became day by day, more closely knitted to this good man and his child ; and the girlish love that had been so strong merged itself into the still deeper affections of my opening womanhood. I loved them—how I loved them the reader will hercafter know !

One day, I was returning home about sunset, and alone. There was a footpath that shortened the distance across the meadows which lay between the village and Greenhurst, and I threaded it wearily, as one walks who has no object. The path led through the hazel thicket where my arm had been wounded. After clambering the wall I sat down among the bushes, weary, and so depressed that I longed to hide myself in their shelter even from the daylight.

I put back the lace that flowed from the short sleeves of my dress, and looked, through rushing tears, at the tiny white spot which the wound had left upon my arm. It was scarcely larger than a pearl, and to me infinitely more precious, for it came from him. It marked the reality of those love words that lay, even then, glowing in the bottom of my heart.

It was all over. He had gone his way in the world. I—yes, I must go mine ; for to remain there in my dear old home with him so near, and yet so far away, was killing me.

I sobbed aloud ; it was not often that weeping did me much good, but everything was so still—and I grew so miserably childish that the tears fell from my eyes like rain. A thrush lighted on a branch close by, and with his pretty head turned on one side, seemed regarding me with compassion. I thought of the lark's nest, where, a child, I had slept so close to death, and wished, oh, how truly, that God had taken me then.

While I sat thus lost in sorrow, a gush of wind swept through the thicket, and I heard some one wading through the tall, red clover tops, shaking off their sweetness upon the air I breathed.

I shrunk back, ashamed of my tears, ashamed to be seen. But the steps approached steadily towards the wall, and I sat by the path, breathless, still hoping that the hazel branches would conceal me.

But the steps diverged a little, and the thicket was parted just before me. My breath came back in a sob. I concealed my eyes with both hands, and cowered back among the bushes.

He paused. I heard a faint exclamation, and then—then I began to sob and tremble. He was at my side half-stooping, half-kneeling; his arm was around me. With one hand he drew down mine and looked into my face.

“Zana—Zana !”

I looked up and smiled.

“My poor Zana,” he said, “you have suffered—you look ill—how is this? They told me that you were happy.”

“Yes, *so* happy,” I replied, yielding myself for one moment to the clasp of his arm—“so happy that it is killing me.”

“Killing you,” he said, laying one hand softly upon my head, and putting it back that he might see the face so changed since we met last. “In solemn truth, I believe it is; how strangely you look, Zana, how much older—how full of soul—how worn with feeling !”

I remembered why this change had been—who and where I was. What right had he, George Irving, of Greenhurst, with his arm around the illegitimate child of his uncle? No wonder his proud mother despised me—her insults were natural—but this tenderness, these looks of love—this caressing arm—what insult could she offer so burning as that?

The fire of this thought flashed through my veins. I sprang up and cast his arm away.

“You have no right—I do not belong to you—never can—never, never !” I exclaimed. “You know it, and yet do this !”

"I did not believe it before, not wholly, not entirely—the suspicion was too dreadful," he answered, turning white. "I will not believe it even yet, till your lips utter it in words."

"Why should I? You know that it is true—that a barrier of iron rests between your love and mine."

"It is enough!" he answered, turning still more deathly pale. "Zana, it is enough—you have stung me to the soul."

"I have not imparted to you any portion of my shame," I answered with bitter tears.

He started as if a viper had stung him.

"Your shame, Zana!—your shame! Speak out, girl—if another had said that word!"——

We both started. He broke off sharply. Upham had crept, unseen, close to his elbow.

"Ha, Irving—so you have found the truant in her nest! Hasn't she grown to be a bird of Paradise, but sly as ever; aint you, Zana?"

I stood in astonishment gazing at him, without uttering a word. This audacity took away my breath.

"I have just come from the parsonage," he continued, with a quiet smile, addressing George. "My bird of birds had flown, but I left the beautiful Cora waiting with great impatience."

Irving gave me a look that made me almost cry out—turned, leaped the wall with a single bound, and left me alone with that reptile.

He looked after George with a smile that died coldly on his lips beneath my searching glance.

"What is this?" I questioned, "your manner has changed, sir. It insults—it offends me!"

"What, you are angry because I have driven away that boyish profligate," he answered; "the lover of Cora, the betrothed of Estelle."

"It is false," I cried, full of indignation.

"Ask Lady Catherine!" he replied.

"I will ask himself," I answered.

"Then you have promised another meeting; it will be a good excuse. But let me warn you, a second private appointment of this kind may reach Lady Catherine. I have but to drop a hint even now, and you are driven ignominiously from the estate; while he—perhaps you have forgotten that but for the bounty of his uncle and Lady Catherine Irving—he is a beggar."

Oh, how the wretch tortured me! I felt every word he spoke like the touch of cold iron.

"Let me pass, I would go home," I said, faint with anger and disgust.

He stepped aside, smiling coldly.

"But first," I said, pausing, "you spoke of Cora, my friend, my sister, and of him—this must be explained."

"I have said my say," was his cold answer.

"Then I will ask him!"

"Of course he will confess all. It is so natural to urge a suit with one lady, while you make her the confidant of your love for another. Really your village beauties know how to deal with men who have learned morality in Paris, and love-making at Vienna."

"But I will tell Cora of this slander."

He smiled.

"Is it slander to say that a pretty angel like Cora Clark has captivated a roving young fellow of Irving's taste?"

"But it is untrue—I will question her."

"I have a great idea of unsophisticated innocence, village simplicity, and all that, Miss Zana, but really permit me to doubt if Miss Cora Clark makes you the confidant of her little love affairs."

"She has none, she never had," I exclaimed, with jealous anger.

He laughed again. The sound stung me like an arrow. I turned away, sprang over the wall, and walked along the foot-path back to the parsonage. My progress grew slower and slower as I fell into thought, for a remembrance of the change

in Cora's manner oppressed me. I came in sight of the parlor window. The glow of Cora's golden hair shone through the dusky green of the ivy leaves as she leaned out, shading her eyes with one hand as if to be certain that she saw aright. She drew back, and directly after I caught a glimpse of some male figure gliding around a corner of the church rapidly, as if to avoid observation. The figure was too slight for Mr. Clark, and at first I strove to convince myself that it might be Upham himself, who had outwalked me, concealed by a hedge that ran near and parallel with the footpath; but I cast the suspicion from me. The coldness which had uniformly marked his acquaintance with my beautiful girl forbade it.

I entered the little parlor, panting, but resolute. Cora rose to receive me, a good deal flushed, and with a look about the eyes as if she had been agitated and weeping. She did not ask the reason of my sudden return, but fixed her blue eyes with a look of affright on my face, as if prepared for, and dreading what I was about to say.

At the time, this did not strike me, but in after days I remembered it well.

"Cora," I said, disarmed by the look of trouble on her sweet face—"Cora, my sister, tell me, who was it that just left you?"

"Why do you ask?—No one—no one has left the cottage. You—you found me alone!"

"And have you been alone all the time since I went away?" I inquired.

"I—I—not quite, my father was here. But why do you ask such questions?"

Her eyes filled, and her sweet lips began to tremble, as they always did when grieved, since she was a little child.

"Tell me one thing, Cora, was it any one from Greenhurst that I just saw going round the church?"

"You saw him then," she said, turning pale, and sinking to her chair. "Oh, Zana!"

I too sunk upon a chair, and we sat gazing into each other's pale face till both burst into tears.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

MY FATHER'S RETURN.

No human being can comprehend the desolation, the heart sickness, that seized upon me after this interview with Cora. Nothing had been explained between us. I had looked in her face, and saw it bathed with tears and guilty blushes, from which my very soul shrunk back. My love for that girl was so true, so deep—my love for him—it was like uprooting the life within me, the agony of bitter conviction that he was trifling with me—with her perhaps. But the very intensity of my sorrow made me calm, nay, even kind to her. I think at that moment she would have confided in me entirely, had I urged it, for she was deeply moved—but I could not do it! For worlds I would not have heard the details of his miserable perfidy; they would have driven me mad.

My faith in human goodness, which had hitherto been to me like a religion, was from this time broken up. I was adrift on the world, full of doubt, terror, and contempt. Cora, George—where could I look for truth? The wickedness of Lady Catherine seemed noble compared to theirs.

I had no other friends, save the two kind hearts in my own home, and there I fled for shelter as a wounded bird to his nest.

It is said that there is no real love unless respect for its object composes the greater share; but is it a truth? Is it the worthy and good on whom our affections are most lavishly bestowed? The history of every-day life tells us no—the history of my own heart answers no. Amid all the bitter feelings that tortured me, love for the two beings that had wronged me

most was still strong in my soul, a pang and curse, but vital as ever.

With all my apparent and real frankness, there was a power of suppression in my nature that no one would have believed. With regard to my own feelings I was always reserved and silent, they were too sacred for every-day handling, and nothing but the inspiration of some generous impulse, or the idea that I could have sensations to be ashamed of, ever won me to confess anything of that inner life which was both my heaven and my torment. Oh, what torment it proved then !

But I was of a nature "to suffer and be strong." Self-centred in my desperate anguish I went on in life, giving out no visible sign by which those two beings who loved me, Turner and Maria, could guess that I had been so deceived.

It was well that I had this strength, that the springs of life within me were both elastic and powerful, for the great battle of existence had but just commenced. I had been aroused to a knowledge of the feebleness and falsehood of others ; soon I was to learn how much of evil lay sleeping in my own nature.

One night Turner came home earlier than usual, and in a tumult of excitement that we had seldom witnessed in him before.

He came to my little room, where I now spent all the day.

"Zana, Zana," he said, drawing me toward him, "come hither, I have something to tell you—I have news."

"What news?" I inquired, with a pang, for it seemed to me that Cora and Irving must have something to do with a subject that could so interest the old man. "I—I am not fond of news, Turner. Nothing good ever comes to me now."

"God only knows, child, whether it is for good or for evil, but Lord Clare is in England ! On his way even now to Greenhurst."

My heart swelled. I felt the blood leaving my lips ; my hands grew cold as ice.

"Turner," I said, wringing his withered hand in mine—"Turner, is Lord Clare my father?"

His small eyes opened large and wide. The wrinkles deepened on his face like lines upon a map. My question took him by surprise.

"I would give ten years of my life, Zana, to say yes or no with certainty."

"Then you cannot tell me," I cried, cruelly disappointed.

"Oh, if I could—if I only could, all might yet end well with you, poor child. But there is no proof—I am not certain myself. How then will it be in my power to convince him? If you could but remember. You were six or seven years old when we found you, Zana, and at that age, a child has many memories—but you had none."

"Yes, one—I remember *her* face."

"But nothing more?"

"No, nothing. To attempt anything more wrenches all my faculties, and brings forth shadows only."

"This is always the answer. What can I do?" muttered the old man, "resemblances are no proof, and I am not sure of that. Zana, have you the least idea how Lord Clare looks?"

"Yes," I answered, "for I have seen his portrait."

"There again," muttered the old man—"there again, at every turn I am blocked out. But that other face, what is it like?"

"Dark, sad; great flashing eyes full of fire, but black as midnight; hair like the folds of a storm-cloud; a mouth—but how can I describe it, so full of tender sorrow, so tremulous? Tell me, is this like my mother? Was she thus, or not?"

"It is too vague, I cannot tell."

"But I have seen it, not flashing thus, but real, every feature still; it was only one glimpse, but I knew that it was her."

"Where did you see this? Long since and living?"

"No, it was a picture, at Greenhurst; I took it from an old cabinet of black wood carved all over and rough with jewels."

"Where is it now—that picture?"

"Lady Catherine has it—she snatched it from me."

"But you knew the face?"

"Yes, I knew the face."

"This is something, but not enough," said Turner, thoughtfully. "Still if his heart speaks for us"——

I laid one hand on my bosom, for it swelled with painful force.

"My heart is speaking now," I said. "If he is my father, God will send an answer."

As I spoke, the sound of distant bells came sweeping through the trees, and we heard the faint murmurs of a shout, as if people at a great distance were rejoicing together.

"He has come. It is from the village," said Turner, and tears rolled down his cheeks. "My boy—my boy, God bless him. Will you not say God bless him, Zana?"

I could not answer; every clash of the bells seemed to strike against my heart. I knew it was my father that was coming; but when Turner asked me to bless him, that face came before me, and *I could not do it*.

Turner left me, for the state of excitement in which those bells had thrown him allowed of nothing but action. He followed no path, but I saw him running at full speed across the park, as if the weight of twenty, not sixty-five years, went with him. Directly, and while the sunset was yet red in the west, I heard the sound of carriage wheels and the swell of dying shouts, as if the villagers had followed their lord up to the lodge-gate. Then all grew still, save the faint sound of wheels, the rustle of a thousand trees, that seemed to carry off the shout amid the sighing of their leaves.

I could not rest, for thought was pain. I wandered about the house, and at length went down stairs in search of Maria. She sat in the little breakfast-room, surrounded by the twilight; and as I entered softly, the sound of her weeping filled the room.

I stole to her side, and sitting down at her feet, laid my head on her lap, excited beyond endurance, but with no power to weep.

She passed her hand softly down my hair, and sobbed more passionately than before.

"What are you crying for? Everybody else seems happy. Only you and Turner receive the Lord of Greenhurst with tears," I said.

"We parted from him with tears," she answered, sobbing afresh.

"You knew him well then, *ma bonne*?" I said, plunging into the subject recklessly now that it was commenced.

"Knew him well?" she answered; then breaking into Spanish, she murmured among her tears, "too well—too well for him or for us."

She took my face between her hands, and gazed down upon it with mournful tenderness.

"My bird," she murmured, "ask me no questions about the earl—my heart is full to-night. It is not you that sits at my feet, but another—another. Oh, what became of her?—what became of her? More than ten years, and we have no answer to give him."

"That person—she who sits in my place overshadows me in your heart—is it my mother?" I questioned, in a whisper.

"The God of heaven only knows!" she answered passionately. "Do not question me, child, for the sound of those bells has unlocked sad memories—I have no control over myself—I shall say forbidden things. Hush, hush, let me listen."

I kept my head upon her lap, brooding in silence over her words. I could wait, but a stern determination to know all, to solve the mysteriousness that surrounded me, filled my being. I thirsted for entire knowledge regarding myself, and resolved to wrench it from its keepers, whatever pain it might bring or give.

But after Maria had wept awhile, she grew calm and circumspect. I could feed my craving with no more of her passionate outbreaks. We sat together till deep in the night, conversing in abrupt snatches, but I gathered nothing from what she said to confirm my suspicion that at least a portion of my history was in her keeping.

Turner did not come back that night, nor till deep in the next morning. When he did appear it was with a step of lead, and with trouble in his heavy eyes. Maria met him at the door, and a few hasty words passed between them before he entered.

As they came in I heard her say, as if repeating the word after him, "dying ! not that—oh, not that !"

"It has killed him at last—I knew it—I foresaw it from the first," answered Turner, bitterly. "The fiends—would to heaven they had all been smothered in their holes before he"—

"Hush, hush," said Maria, "not a word against her. If he is dying—what may her fate have been?"

"God forgive me, I was wrong—but there is a sight up yonder, Maria, that would draw tears from marble. But, Zana, where is she?"

"Has he spoken of it? Has he inquired?" asked Maria, quickly.

"He asked only one question—if she was found, nothing more."

"And you spoke of Zana?"

"No, of what use would it be? I have no right to torture him with bare suspicions; but the girl—let him see her—if his heart does not speak then, we never must."

"She will not refuse—you always judge rightly," was Maria's mild rejoinder. "Must I go with her?"

"No, let her come alone. God, tell her."

I came forward and put my arm through that of the old man. He drew back, held me at a distance with both hands, and pondered over every feature of my face, as if his life had depended on perusing them correctly. At last he drew me gently toward him, and smoothed my hair with his palms.

"Zana," he said, "you are a woman now—be firm and still; whatever you see, do not give way."

"I will not; guide, and I shall follow steadily."

"Lady Catherine is at Greenhurst," he said,

"I know it."

"She forbids you to come ; she threatens me if I attempt to bring you to Lord Clare. Have you courage to follow me against her orders ?"

"Yes !"

"And her son's, should he urge them on me ?"

My words came like lead, but I answered, "yes," to that also.

"But will you do more than that for my sake, Zana ? Will you steal in privately and avoid them all ?"

I could not answer at first. The mere thought of entering that stately dwelling was hateful ; but to enter it stealthily like the thief that woman had called me, was too much. Unconsciously I recoiled.

"Zana, Lord Clare cannot live many days. If he dies without seeing you, all is lost—will you come ? Will you be guided once—only this once by old Turner ?"

I remembered all that he had done for me, all his beautiful integrity of character, and blushed for the hesitation which seemed like distrust.

"I am ready to follow you now, and always," I said. "Tell me what to do, and I will obey."

"Thank you, child," said the old man. "Come at once, in the dress you have on. Lady Catherine has gone out to drive—if she returns before we leave, have no fear, I shall be with you."

I threw a mantle over my dress, and went out, keeping up with Turner, who walked on rapidly, and absorbed in thought. We entered the back door over the very steps upon which the old man had found me ten years ago. He seemed to remember it, for as I crossed the threshold he turned and reached forth his hand as if to help me along. His heart was busy with the past. One could see that very plainly, for he gave a little start as I took his hand, and turned a sort of apologizing smile upon me, and I saw tears steal one by one into his eyes, as he pressed my hand and drew me forward. We threaded the hall,

and mounted the massive oak staircase without encountering even a servant. Then Turner clasped my hand tighter, as if to give me courage, and led me rapidly through several vast chambers, till we came to a closed door at which he paused.

"Step into that window and hide yourself behind the curtains," he whispered.

I went at once, and when he saw the heavy crimson silk sweep over me, Turner knocked lightly at the door.

It was opened by young Morton, who stepped out and spoke in a whisper.

"He has been inquiring for you."

"That is well," answered Turner, "you can leave him entirely now and get some rest—I will take your place."

"Thank you. I have just ordered some fruit—you will find it on the tray yonder," said Morton, evidently glad to be relieved.

"Yes, yes, I will attend to it."

As he spoke, Turner followed the young man into the next room, watching him as he walked down the long perspective of a neighboring gallery.

When certain that he was quite alone, the old man came to the window and stepped behind the drapery. He was very pale, and I saw by the nervous motion of his hands that he was subduing his agitation with difficulty.

"Zana," he whispered, huskily, "I am going in; after a little, follow me with the fruit you will find yonder. Bring it in, quietly, as if you were one of the people. Then obey my directions as they would? Do you comprehend?"

"Perfectly," I whispered, trembling from head to foot, but resolute to act.

"Now God be with us!" he ejaculated, wringing my hand.

"Amen!" trembled on my lip, but I could not speak.

He left me and entered the chamber. I waited a moment, holding one hand over my heart, which frightened me with its strange beating. Then I stepped forth and looked around the room. It was a sort of ante-chamber, large and richly fur-

nished, but somewhat in disorder, as if lately used. Upon a marble table in one corner stood some crystal flasks ruby with wine, and with them a small silver basket full of fruit, with a vase of flowers crowded close to it.

Even then the rude way in which these exquisite objects were huddled together wounded my sense of the beautiful ; and with my trembling hands I hastily arranged the fruit, mingled snowy and golden flowers with the rich glow of the cherries, and shaded the strawberries with cool green leaves. As I gathered a handful of creamy white raspberries in the centre of the basket with trembling haste, Turner opened the door and looked out. His face, so pale and anxious, startled me, and I almost let the basket fall.

He closed the door, and nerving myself I lifted the fruit again and carried it forward. One moment's pause and I went in.



CHAPTER XL.

ONCE MORE AT GREENHURST.

It was a large chamber, full of rich, massive furniture. The windows were all muffled with waves of crimson silk, and I found myself in the hazy twilight they created, dizzy and blinded by a rush of emotions that it seemed impossible for me to control. After a little, the haze cleared from my vision, and I saw before me a tall man, attenuated almost to a shadow, sitting in a great easy-chair with his eyes closed, as if asleep.

I looked at him with a strained and eager gaze. His head rested on a cushion of purple silk, and a quantity of soft, fair locks, so lightly threaded with silver, that, in the rich twilight of the room, all traces of it were lost, lay scattered over it, with

the purple glowing through. The face was like marble, pure and as white, but with dusky shadows all around the eyes, and a burning red in the cheeks that made me shudder. A Turkish dressing-gown of Damascus silk, spotted with gold and lined with emerald green, lay wrapped around his wasted figure. His hands were folded in the long Oriental sleeves, and I could see the crimson waves over his chest rise and fall rapidly with his sharp and frequent respiration.

I stood beside him unnoticed, for my footsteps had fallen upon the richly piled carpet lightly as an autumn leaf. The basket shook in my hands, for my limbs knocked together, and the perspiration started upon my arms and forehead. But I made no sound, forced back the tears that struggled in my heart, and stood waiting for what might befall.

Lord Clare turned feebly on his cushion, and let one pale hand fall down from his bosom.

"Turner," he said, in a faint, low voice, "did I not ask for something?"

"Yes, my lord—some fruit. It is here."

I approached. Lord Clare opened his eyes—those wild, blue eyes, and turned them full upon me.

I could no longer bear my weight, my limbs gave way, and I fell upon one knee, holding up the basket between my shaking hands.

Turner drew close to my side, holding his breath and trembling.

Lord Clare did not touch the fruit, but fell slowly back on the cushion with his great burning eyes upon my face.

"Turner," he said at last, sitting upright and speaking in quick gasps—"Turner, what is this? Who is she?"

"I do not know," answered the old man, "we found her on the door-step years ago. Be tranquil, Master Clarence. If she is the one we have sought for, there is no proof but those eyes—that face."

Lord Clare reached out his arms, and tears smothered the painful gaze of his eyes.

"Aurora," he said, in a voice of such tenderness that my tears followed it, "forgive me before I die."

Turner clasped his hands and held them up toward heaven, trembling like withered leaves, while tears rolled silently down his cheeks.

"You know, Master Clarence, it cannot be herself."

Lord Clare turned his eyes from me to Turner, then lifting one pale hand up to his forehead, he settled it over his eyes, and directly great drops came starting from between the fingers. A feeble shudder passed over his frame, and he murmured plaintively, "No, it is her child, our child. But where is she?"

"I never learned," answered Turner, sadly.

"Ask her, I cannot."

"It is useless, my lord, she knows nothing!"

"She must—she must—my child was six years old. At that age children know everything," he answered eagerly, "and Zana was very forward, my bright Zana."

He looked at me, till I shrunk from the feverish glow of his eyes. At last he spoke, and my very heart trembled beneath the sweet pathos of his voice.

"Zana, where is your mother? Tell me, child; I cannot die till she has spoken to me again."

I bowed down my face, and answered only with bitter sobs.

"Is she dead? Is Aurora dead that you weep, but cannot speak?" he questioned, faintly.

"Alas! I do not know!" was my agonized reply.

"My child—Zana—and not know of her mother's fate! what unnatural thing is this?" he cried, burying his face in the long sleeves of his gown. "This child is not my daughter, Turner; Aurora's child could not have forgotten her mother thus."

I struggled with myself—from my innermost soul I called on God to help me—to give me back the six years of life that had been wrested from my brain. My temples throbbed; my limbs shook with the effort; it seemed as if I were going mad.

Lord Clare lifted his face; his eyes swam in tears; his pale

lips trembled. Laying both hands on my head, he spoke to me again—spoke so tenderly I thought my heart must break before he had done.

“Zana—my daughter—my poor, lost child, what has come over you? Do not be frightened—do not tremble so. Look up in my face—let me see your eyes fully. Turner, they are *her* eyes, my heart answers to them, oh, how mournfully. Zana, I am your father—you should know that, altered as I am, for men do not change like children. There, love, there, stop crying; calm yourself. I have but one wish on earth now, and that depends on you.”

“On me?” I gasped.

“On you, my darling. Listen, I call you darling, does not the old word bring back some memory?”

He looked beseechingly in my face, waiting for a reply that I could not give. My head drooped forward, bowed down with the anguish of my imbecility.

“It is sweet—it thrills my heart to the centre,” I said, mournfully.

“And awakes some memory? You remember it as something heard and loved, far, far back in the past. Is it not so?”

I shook my head.

He bent forward, wound his arms lovingly around me, and, drawing me upward to his bosom, kissed my forehead.

“And this,” he said, folding me to his heart so close that I could feel every sharp pulsation. “Is there nothing familiar now?—nothing that reminds you of an old stone balcony, full of flowers, and a bright little thing leaping to her father’s bosom; and she, that wronged woman, so darkly beautiful, looking on? Child, my Aurora’s child, is there no memory like this in your soul now?”

“This tenderness has filled my heart with tears, I can find nothing else there,” I answered, sadly.

He unfolded his arms, and they dropped down, loose and helpless, like broken willow-branches, and the quick panting of his bosom made me shudder with a thought that he was dying

I arose, and then he started upright in his chair, and fixed his flashing eyes upon me.

"Is this creature mine or not?" he said—"Aurora's daughter or a mockery? Am I accursed among the children of the earth for one wrong act? Will this mystery walk with me to the grave? Am I a father, or childless? Girl, answer me—wring the truth from that brain! Before God I must know it, or death will not be rest. Your mother, Zana—where is your mother?"

His voice rang sharp and clear through the chamber, filling it like the scream of a wounded bird. His eyes were wild; his cheeks hueless. I cowered back, chilled to the soul by his last words. The room disappeared—everything grew white, and shuddering with cold I felt, as it were, snow-drifts rushing over me, and through their paralyzing whiteness came the cry,

"Your mother, Zana, where is your mother?"

How long this lasted I do not know, but my next remembrance was of sitting upon the carpet, faint, and with a stunned feeling, as if some one had given me a heavy blow. A silver basket lay upturned by my side, and a mass of crimson fruit, matted with flowers, lay half among the frosted silver, half upon the carpet.

The room was still as death, save the short, painful sound of some one breathing near me. I struggled to my feet, and sat down in a great easy-chair which stood close by me. Then, as my sight cleared, I saw that a window had been opened, that the drapery was flung back from a massive ebony bedstead, and upon the white counterpane I saw Lord Clare lying among the folds of his gorgeous dressing-gown, pale and motionless as marble.

Turner stood over him, bathing his forehead, white almost as the sick man.

I arose and would have approached the bed, but Turner waved me back, and I left the room, sick to the very heart's core.

I met some persons in the galleries, but passed on without

noticing them. As I reached the lower hall, Lady Catherine Irving came in at the front entrance, apparently just from her carriage.

"How is this?" she said, turning pale with rage. "Who permitted this? How came the girl here?"

Her words had no effect upon me; the miserable pre-occupation of my soul rendered them harmless. I went by her without answering, and left the house.

"See that the creature is never admitted again; I will discharge the servant who lets her in," she continued, following me to the door.

I took no heed, but remembered her words afterward.

I wandered off in the woods, for the very thought of the close air of a house maddened me. Reflect I did not; a chaos of wild thoughts and wilder feelings possessed me.

At last I found myself on the eminence which I have described more than once, from which a view of Marston Court could be obtained. The strange man whom I had met there, years ago, came to my mind; and, singular as it may seem, I thought of him with a sort of hope which grew into a desire for his presence.

I thought of my father, for not a doubt arose within me that Lord Clare was my father—of the agonizing darkness which hung over his death-bed—of the inability which prevented me sweeping that darkness aside. What was the mysterious thread which lay upon my faculties? What human power could ever unloose it?

I looked around in anguish of heart. Was there no help? I would pray to God, humble myself like a little child at his feet, that he might mercifully enlighten me. There was hope here, and I knelt down upon the turf, bowing my face in silence before God. The effort composed me; it hastened the natural reaction which must follow any intense excitement, and in my motionless position I became calmer.

CHAPTER XLI.

MY STRANGE VISITOR.

ALL at once, I felt a hand laid on my shoulder, and, starting up, saw the strange man by my side.

He was little changed. The same picturesque combination of rich colors soiled and rudely flung together, composed his garments ; the same sharp glitter made me shrink from a full glance of his eyes. When he smiled, I saw that his teeth were even and white as ever.

"Zana, get up ; you need me, and I am here."

"I do need some one ; but who can help me ?" I said despondingly.

"I can !"

"No, God alone can give me what I want !"

"And what is that, Zana ?" he said, smiling.

"Light, memory. I would know who and what I am !"

"Well, child, that is easy !"

"To God, truly—but to him alone."

"But why do you want this knowledge now more than formerly ?" he asked.

"My father is dying in anguish from this want !"

"Your father—and who is he ?" was the abrupt question with which he answered this.

"I know, but have not the right to tell !"

"But how came you by the knowledge ?"

"My heart lay, for a little time, against his, and they understood each other. I knew that the same blood beat in both, certainly as if an angel had told me, I want no other evidence," was my prompt answer.

"And you crave this knowledge in proof, that it may render his death easy ?"

"Yes!"

"And for no other reason?"

"That I may know myself and those who gave me life, that is all!"

"But Lord Clare is rich!" said the man, fixing his keen eyes upon me. "Did you think of that?"

"I did not mention Lord Clare," was my answer, given in astonishment at the reckless way in which he handled my secret.

"But you were thinking of him, and that he would have money to give a child proven to be his!"

"No, I never thought of it—never shall think of it!"

"There is no Rommany in that," he muttered, "the blood does not speak there."

Then speaking louder, he addressed me, pointing toward Marston Court.

"Look," he said, fastening his wild eyes on my face, "that is a fine estate, and not tied up like Greenhurst to legal heirs; Lord Clare's daughter might get that if she had proof of her birth before the earl dies. Had this nothing to do with your anxiety just now?"

"Nothing," I replied, with a touch of scorn. "I do not want that estate, or any other."

"Fool!" sneered the man; "if I believed you, the secret were not worth telling!"

"What secret?" I inquired, breathlessly; "can *you* tell me anything of my mother?"

"And if I did, what then?"

"I would worship you!"

"Yes, as she did," he answered, with a sort of mournful fierceness in his eyes and voice.

"As who did?" I demanded.

"Your mother, Aurora."

"That was what he called her."

"Who?"

"It was the name my father used!"

"Ha ! the murderer ! how dare he ?"

"But you know something of my mother !" I said eagerly ;
"tell it me !"

"That you may give Lord Clare the knowledge he thirsts for ?"

"Yes !"

"You shall have this knowledge—he shall have it—and may it crush him down, down "——

"Stay !" I cried out, seizing his uplifted arm, "I will not listen—it is my father you curse."

"*Your* father—I know it ; but what was he to her ?—to Aurora ?—what was he to her ? What was she to him ?"

A flood of burning shame rushed over my face, and my eyes fell beneath the lurid scorn of his.

"Can you know this and not hate the traitorous gentile ?" he said.

I covered my burning face, but could not answer.

"Look up ! the fire of your Caloe blood is burning to waste ; it should hurl vengeance on those who have heaped shame on it."

"What, on my father ?" I cried, struck with horror—"he is dying !"

"And without proof that *you* are his child ?"

"Alas ! yes."

"He shall have it."

"Give it me now, now," I cried, in eager joy.

"No ; let him writhe a little longer—revenge should be eaten slowly—you must learn this—the blow that kills at once makes a gourmand of the avenger—he swallows all at a mouthful."

There was something fiendish in the man's look as he said this, that made me shudder as I faltered out,

"You terrify me—I do not understand. Will you tell me of my mother ?"

"I will give you the knowledge soon."

"Oh, now, that it may bless his last moments," I pleaded ;
"he may not live another hour."

"That it may curse him," shouted the man. "But that I am sure of it, he might die like a dog, in his ignorance. Not for all those lands which the secret shall bring you, child, would I speak, only I know how sweet my words will be to him," he cried, pointing toward Greenhurst. "Choke back those tears, little one ; it is time you were among us, full time."

"But my mother—speak of her—you terrify me."

"Yes, I forget," he said, with a sudden change of manner, "there is gentile blood in your cheeks, and that is cowardly ; but what I have to say will fire it up by and by, Zana," he continued, with a touch of feeling, "you are like your mother !"

"I know it."

"How ? I thought—nay, nay, you cannot remember her !"

"Yes, I do."

"How and where ?"

"The face, only the face, I remember that, nothing more !"

"It was a beautiful face, Zana."

"I know it—very beautiful !"

His forehead grew heavy and dark. A look of wild horror came into his eyes that were dwelling upon me in apparent wrath.

Just then a gun was fired near us, and through the trees I saw George Irving and Morton coming toward us.

"Hush, no outcry," whispered the man, drawing me back into a thicket. "Come, or do you wish them to see you ?"

"No, no—heaven forbid !" I cried, shrinking under cover.

The man smiled grimly.

"It is well," he said ; "there is no contamination here—the blood is true to itself yet—I will leave you now !"

"No, no, not till you tell me of my mother," I cried, wild with the dread of losing this clue to my history.

"Not here, it is impossible," was his answer. "You have that black pony yet ?"

"Yes."

"And are no coward ? not afraid of the dark ?"

"No."

"After nightfall come to yonder old house."

"What, Marston Court?"

"Yes, I will be there!"

"And will you tell me all?"

"Yes!"

He darted from me while speaking, and the next instant all trace of him was lost.

I must have remained a long time buried in the woods, but I have no remembrance even of my own sensations. So much was crowded on my brain that it seemed stolid to all subjects but the one great wish to learn more. Up to the time I met that strange being, who seemed so familiar and yet so frightful, I had been overwhelmed with tender grief. My father, suffering, perhaps dying—my father so lately found, filled every thought. No doubt entered my mind that he was my father; for months the conviction had gradually settled upon me; but when I remembered the distrust which tortured him, a painful wish to conquer it—to sweep it away, possessed me, not for my own sake—never for a moment did I think of any advantage it might prove to myself—but that he might be satisfied; that the cruel check that made his tenderness for me a torture might be removed.

But now came other feelings, such as I had never known or dreamed of before. I have repeated that man's conversation word for word, but its effect no power of mine can reveal. Instead of that tender, holy thirst for knowledge that might give my father peace, a fierce curiosity took possession of my soul. I felt not like a child, but an avenger. I would know myself that night; mysteries should henceforth cease to surround me. The blackness would be swept from my brain, and by that man—that man. Was he man or demon? Could anything human, with so little effort, have filled my bosom with bitterness? I was to meet him that night, meet him in secrecy and darkness, in a strange place—I, a young girl, not more than seventeen. It did not frighten me; I panted for the hour to come, though the very thought thrilled me through and through

with the idea of a sacrilege performed with a demon. My heart would now and then recoil from the thought, not in fear, but as from something unholy that I had resolved to do.

This thought could not deter me ; on the contrary, it imparted ferocious strength to my resolution. I was determined to pluck and eat the fruit of knowledge, though it poisoned me. Toward evening, when I saw the first beams of sunset shooting like golden lances through the chestnut boughs and broken against their stately boles, I awoke from this chaos of thought and went home.

As I mounted the stairs to my room, Maria called after me, begging that I would come down and eat something ; but I hurried on, closed the door of my chamber, and bolted it without answering a word. The very idea of seeing any one that night was hateful. She came softly up the stairs and knocked a long time, telling me that Turner had not been at home all day, and that she was *so* anxious about us both. I took no heed, but sat down by a window, looking with fierce impatience on the west.

A great embankment of clouds, black as chaos, rolled up from where the sun had been, sweeping all its glowing gold and crimson up through their ebon outskirts, where it burned and quivered in folds and fringes of fiery brightness. It was a beautiful sight, but lurid and wild, covering the earth with uncouth shadows, and filling the woods with a pale glaire that to me seemed demoniac.

It answered well to the fierce impatience gnawing at my heart ! Tented by that dark cloud, I should go forth on my errand with firmness. The more dreary my road became, the better I should like it.

When the cloud had spread and blackened over the whole horizon, I started up and put on my dress of dark cloth and a broad-leaved beaver hat, which I tied firmly on my head with a scarlet silk handkerchief, passed over the crown. I searched for no gloves, but went out, darting like a shadow through the hall, that Maria might not detect me.

I stopped by a laburnum tree and broke off a shoot, stripping the leaves away with my hand, for I had no time to search for my little gold and agate-headed whip then. Jupiter was in his stall. I girded on his saddle, and buckled the throat-latch of his bridle so tightly, that he rose back, shaking off my hold. At another time I might have regretted this impetuous haste, but now I gave Jupiter a blow over the head with my whip, that made him whimper like a child.

I took no notice, but led him out, and from the door-sill, which was somewhat lifted from the ground, sprang to the saddle. He hung back when I attempted to move, but I struck him smartly over the ears and he walked on, but sideling and plunging with great discontent. I suppose the dense clouds and the close atmosphere terrified him; but to me their sluggish grandeur was full of excitement.

After we had cleared the woods, my old pony became more tractable. Very soon his speed answered to my sharp impatience, and we dashed on through the lurid twilight with spectre-like velocity. As we neared Marston Court, the darkness settled thick and heavy over everything. We could hardly distinguish the turrets and pointed towers from the black sky that they seemed to loom against. The road became ascending and broken. More than once Jupiter stumbled over the loose boulders that had rolled down the banks into the road.

As we drew near the building the trees closed in upon us. Their gnarled branches hung low, and vines now and then trailed down, almost sweeping me from the saddle. The atmosphere was heavy and still as death; not a leaf stirred; no sound but the tramp of Jupiter reached us from any quarter. My heart grew heavy. I would have given the world for a gush of air or a gleam of starlight, everything around was so terribly black.

Still, I urged Jupiter on, following the deviations of a carriage-road half choked up. We passed by a pile of something that seemed denser and closer than the great trees, which

slowly assumed the outline of a building overrun with foliage, and this I took for a ruined lodge.

After passing it, we found ourselves tangled up in the luxurious growth of some pleasure-ground run to waste; for long trailing branches swept across my face, and from the perfume, which rose heavy and sickening on the close air, I knew that Jupiter was treading flowers to death every moment with his hoofs.

At last, we came close to the building. All around the base was matted and overrun with ivy, and the straggling branches of ornamental trees. I checked Jupiter, hoping to detect some light or signal to guide me on.

The outline of a vast building alone met my search. It might have been a heap of rocks or the spur of a mountain, for any idea that I could obtain of its architecture; but its blackness and size disheartened me. How was I to search, in a pile like that, for the man I had come to meet? As I sat upon Jupiter looking wistfully upward, the clouds broke above and began to quiver, and from the depths rushed out a flash, followed by a broad, lurid sheet of lightning.

There, for the first time, and a single moment, I saw Marston Court, its gables, its stone balconies, heavy with sculpture, its facade flanked with towers that loomed grimly over the broad steps and massive granite balustrades that wound up from where we stood to the front door.

In my whole life I never witnessed a scene more imposing. A glimpse, and all was black again. The flash had given me one view of the mansion, nothing more. I was impressed painfully by its vastness. How could I force an entrance?—how make way through the vast interior when that was obtained?

It seemed a hopeless effort, but my determination was strong as ever;—so springing to the ground, I felt my way to the stone balustrade and tied Jupiter. Then guiding myself by the carved stone, I mounted one flight of the steps that curved like the two horns of a crescent from the great oaken doors that divided them upon the arch.

I started, and a shriek burst from me. Upon my hand, which lay upon the balustrade, another fell. When I shrieked it grasped my fingers like iron, and a voice that I knew, said in that language—the language I had never spoken, but could understand—"hush. Who taught you to fear?"

"You came upon me so abruptly, so still!" I whispered, shuddering as his breath floated across my lips.

"Speak in your own language—speak Rommany," he said, in the same tongue.

"I cannot," was my half timid answer.

"Try!"

The command was imperative. I made an effort to answer in his own mysterious tongue. To my surprise the words syllabled themselves rudely on my trembling lips; he comprehended me.

"Where are you taking me?" I had said.

He grasped my hand till the pain made me cry out.

"It is there—the true fire—old Papita kindled it in the soul of her great-grandchild—the mystery is not broken—the sorcery still works—queen of our people, speak again," he cried, with an outburst of fiery enthusiasm, more impressive from the hushed tones in which he spoke.

I felt like one possessed. By what power did my tongue form that language?—what was it? All at once, while he waited for me to speak, I began to shiver and burst into tears. He tossed my hand away with a gesture of contempt.

"Bah! you are only a half-blood after all, the Caloe is poisoned on your tongue."

I checked the tears that so offended him, and moved breathlessly forward, relieved by the gesture which had freed me from his hand.

When we reached the broad, stone platform that clasped the two staircases in one, he took hold of my hand again. That moment another flash of lightning leaped from the clouds, sheeting us, the building and all its neglected grounds in a glare of bluish light.

It blinded me for an instant, then I saw the man's face clearly, bending over me as I cowered to the stones. The lightning had no effect upon me like the unearthly glow of those eyes. Since then I have seen birds fascinated by the undulating movements of a serpent, and they always brought back a shuddering remembrance of that hour.

"Up," he said, grasping my arm, and lifting me to his side, "half the true blood is stagnant still. We will set it on fire."

He placed one heavy foot against a leaf of the oaken door, and it fell open with a clang that resounded frightfully from the deep, empty hall. Again the lightning blazed upon the floor, tessellated with blocks of black and white marble, and suits of antique armor, with shields and firearms, that hung upon the wall.

"It is a fearful night," I said, looking wildly at my companion.

"Gitanilla!" he said, turning upon me with folded arms, and a fierce gathering of the brow, "I have seen a morning when the sunlight lay rosy among the snow-peaks—when the earth seemed covered with sifted pearls—when every breath poured health and vigor into the frame; I have seen such a morning more fearful a thousand times than this! Come with me!"

"What for?—where?" I demanded, thrilled and astonished by the glowing words, which I must ever fail to give in English.

"That you may hate the sunshine and love the storm as I do—that whiteness may make you shudder—and nothing but black midnight seem beautiful. Come with me!"

"Are you possessed? Would you possess me with some evil thing?" I said, terribly excited. "Would you fill my veins with gall, my soul with hate?"

"Yes," he answered, through his shut teeth, leading me along the marble floor.

I shuddered, remembering what I had been only that morning, and the fearful sensations that possessed me then. Was it a fiend that I was following?

"Oh, I feel the bitterness, the soul-blight even now. Unclasp my hand," I shrieked.

"Are you afraid?" he retorted, with a sneer.

"Yes, I am afraid."

He dropped my hand.

"Go, you are not worthy to learn anything of your mother—go, such knowledge is not for cowards."

"My mother," I cried, "oh, I had forgotten. Yes, tell me of her—I will follow anywhere, only tell me."

"Nay, I will tell you everything—come!"

He drew me rapidly forward, threading the darkness like a night bird. We mounted steps winding upward till I was sick and dizzy. At last he passed into what seemed to me a small circular room, high in one of the towers.

"Sit down," he said, pressing a hand upon my shoulder till I sunk into a seat that yielded to my weight. Sit down and keep still, we are alone, high above the earth; the stars, which those of your blood should read like a parchment, are all hidden. It has a bad look for the future, but this is the appointed hour."

He paused a moment, and seemed to be leaning from a narrow window interrogating the darkness. He turned abruptly and said,

"You saw Lord Clare, this morning?"

"Yes."

"And he is dying?"

"Alas! I fear so."

"How many days first?"

"What!" I exclaimed, shocked by the coldness with which he questioned me.

"How many days at the most will he live?"

"I cannot tell; God forbid that I should ever guess."

"Would you save his life?"

"Would I?—would I keep the breath in my own bosom?"

"Then you wish him to live?"

"Wish it, yes—heaven only knows how much!"

“Renegade !”

“What ?”

“Nay,” he said, with a sudden change from ferocity to the most child-like tenderness, “let her know all—how can she judge ?”

CHAPTER XLII.

VISIONS AND RETROSPECTIONS.

CHALECO came close to me and laid one hand softly on my head.

“Be tranquil—be tranquil,” he murmured, smoothing my hair from time to time.

A soft languor stole over me. I sunk slowly down upon what seemed to be a couch, and like two rose-leaves heavy with fragrance, my eyelids closed so softly that I felt a thrill as the lashes fell upon my cheek.

He kept one hand upon my head awhile, then moved it gently across my forehead and over my eyes. I felt a delicious and almost imperceptible current of air flowing coolly over my bosom and down my arms. Then the air was agitated, as if a group of angels were fanning me with their wings ; the lids fell heavier still over my slumberous eyes ; my limbs grew rigid, but with a sensation of exquisite repose. It began to lighten. I knew that fiery gleams were breaking and sparkling all around me. Then followed peal after peal of thunder making the tower rock, and upheaving, as it seemed, the very foundations of the building.

I was conscious of all this, but it did not disturb the languid repose into which I had fallen. The dawning consciousness of two lives—two entire beings came sweetly upon my soul. I saw my old self fading away ; I was alone in the universe with

that man ; the whole past or present, for the time, held nothing but him and me. Then followed a blank like that which fills the first year of infancy, dreamy and quiet.

Pang after pang went through me after that, each sweeping the shadows from my brain ; and I saw a young girl, mature in her dark bright beauty, but almost a child still, holding an infant in her lap. The little one was like its mother, the same eyes, the same rich complexion. I knew the mother well, and the child. My own soul, full of innocent love, lay in the bosom of that child.

I looked around. The two were in an old farm-house, among hills covered with purple heath ; sheep grazed along the upland slopes ; and cattle ranged the valleys. Men in short plaid garments and flat bonnets watched the sheep ; and the young mother carried her child to the window, that it might see the lambs play as the shepherds drove them to the fold.

While the mother stood there with her child, a stout farmer came to the window, and taking the little one from her arms began to dance it up and down in the bright air, till the silken curls blew all over its face. The mother laughed, and so did the child, gleefully, like a little bird. Then came a woman round an angle of the house ; her sleeves were rolled up, leaving her round, well-shaped arms bare to the elbow. She took the child from her good man, and smoothing its curls with her plump fingers, covered it with kisses.

A shot from the hill-side made the whole group start joyfully forward. The old man shaded his eyes and looked eagerly toward the mountain. The young mother seized her child and ran forward, her eyes sparkling, and her cheeks in a glow.

Along the shore of a little lake that lay in the lap of those hills, came a young man in hunter's dress. A gun, which he had just discharged, was thrown back upon his shoulders, and as he saw the young mother coming toward him, he flung out a white handkerchief, smiling a happy welcome.

I knew the young man's face well, and my soul, which was in the child's bosom, sang for joy as he came up.

A moment of obscurity, of mistiness and shadows—then appeared before me the cottage in Greenhurst, its gardens, its dim old wilderness of trees ; and now my soul leaped from event to event, scaling over all that might have been repose, and seizing upon the rugged points of that human history like a vampire.

Again and again I saw that young mother, so beautiful, so sad, that every fibre of my being ached with sympathy. It was not her face or her form alone that I saw, but all the doubt, the anguish, the humiliation of her wild, proud nature tortured my own being. I not only saw her, but felt all the changes of her soul writing themselves on my own intelligence.

Why was it that in that wonderful sleep or trance—I know not to this day what it was—but how did it happen that I could read every thought and feeling in my mother's heart, but only the actions of my father ? Did that weird being so will it, that all my burning nature should pour itself forth in sympathy for the wronged woman, and harden into iron toward the man ? I saw him too, pale, struggling with indecisions, that ended in more than mental torture, but this awoke no sympathy in my bosom, none, none. Then came another upon my vision, a proud, noble woman, always clad in black, that hovered around the old dwelling where my father rested, like a raven. She was my mother's rival ; I felt it the moment her black shadow fell upon my memory. I saw her in a dim old room, and he was with her. Both were pale and in trouble ; she sat watching him through her tears, and those tears shook his manhood till he trembled from head to foot. A child, dark-eyed, and with a look of intelligence beyond her years, sat crouching in a corner, with her great black eyes following every movement—I knew that child well. It was the infant who had shouted its joyous greeting to the young huntsman. Its blood was beating then in my own veins.

Again I saw the woman, beneath a clump of gnarled old oaks. She lay prone upon the earth, white as death, stiffened like a corpse ; a horse dripping with sweat stood cowering on the other side of a chasm that yawned between him and the lady.

There was that child again, peering out from a thicket, with her wild eyes gleaming with ferocious joy, as if she gloried in the stillness that lay like death upon the woman.

Then a huntsman rode up, and I saw the white face of the woman on his bosom. He kissed the face—he wept over it—he laid her on the grass, and looked piteously around for help.

Then the child sprang up like a tiger-cub from the thicket; with a bound she stood beside the two; her little form dilating, her whole attitude full of wrath. Words were spoken between the man and the child, bitter, harsh words. Then the woman moved faintly; the child saw it; her tiny hands were clenched; her teeth locked together, and lifting her foot, she struck it fiercely down upon the lady's bosom.

A blow from the man dashed her to the ground; confusion followed, flashes as of fire filled my vision. Then I saw the child wandering through the tall trees alone, her little features locked, her arms tightly folded.

It grew dark, so dark that under the trees the young mother, who stood by her child, could not see the fierce paleness of her face. Then I saw them both wandering like thieves along the vast mansion house. They were separated. The mother went into numberless chambers searching for some one, and holding her breath. At one moment she stood over a bed, on which the strange woman slept; then I was sure that the child was hers by the deadly blackness of her eyes as they fell on the noble sleeper. She passed out with one hand firmly clenched, though it held nothing, and wandered into the darkness again.

Once more she stood in the light, dim and faint, for the lamp that gave it was hidden under an alabaster shade, and sent forth only a few pale rays like moonbeams. I saw little that surrounded her, for my soul was searching the great agony of heart with which she stood beside that man. He was not in bed, but wrapped in a dressing-gown of some rich Oriental silk, lay upon a couch with his eyes closed and smiling.

She held her breath, and the last tender love that ever beat

in her heart swelled up from its depths as she bent down and gathered the smile with her lips.

He started. She fell upon her knees ; she locked his hand in hers ; her black tresses drooped over him ; oh, with what agony pleaded for a return of the love that had been the pulse of her life, the breath on her lips.

He arose and shook her off—with a mighty effort he steeled his heart and shook her off, the mother of his child, the wife of his bosom. She stood upright, pale and transfigured. For one whole minute she remained gazing on him speechless, and so still that the beating of his heart sounded clear and distinct in the room. She turned and glided into the darkness again, and she disappeared with her child, who waited for her there.

Then followed a panorama of scenery, rivers, mountains, and seas, over which the mother wandered, holding her child by the hand. At last she stood in sight of an ancient city, rich with Moorish relics, but as I turned to gaze on them a crowd of fierce human beings surrounded her, filling the air with hoarse noises, glaring at her and the child with their fierce eyes. An old woman, tiny as a child, and thin as a mummy, stood by, shouting back their reviling with defiance. Thus with whoop, and taunt, and sacrilegious gibes, they drove the poor creature onward to the mountains. Up and up she clambered with the little one still clinging to her neck, till the snow became heavy around her, and she waded knee-deep through it, tottering and faint. At last the crowd surged together around a mountain peak, and pointed with hoarse shouts to a valley half choked up with stone cairns and shimmering with untrod snow.

Down into the virgin whiteness of this valley the black masses poured, treading down the snow with all their squalid ferocity doubled by contrast with its whiteness. They took the child from her mother and carried her shrieking to the outskirts of the crowd. I knew the man that held her, and read all the fierce agony of his grief as he strove to blind the child to the horrible deed that crowd was perpetrating.

I saw it all—the first unsteady whirl of stones, the fiendish

eagerness that followed ; I heard the shrieks—I felt her death agony.

Oh, how I struggled ! how I pleaded with the strong will that enslaved my faculties ! how I prayed that he would redeem me from the horrors of that mountain pass ! But no, the curse of memory must be complete ; I was compelled to live over the agony of my mother's death.

I knew well all the time that the child and myself were one being ; but as in ordinary life a person often looks upon his own sufferings with self-pity, as if he were a stranger ; so I followed wearily after the little creature as they bore her, an orphan, from the Valley of Stones. I saw her growing thin, pining, pining always for the mother who was dead, till she grew into a miserable shadow, with all the life of her being burning in those large eyes. The old woman and the man kept her to themselves, but she seemed pining to death while they wandered from mountain to mountain, and at last across the seas.

Again Greenhurst arose on my vision, the old building among distant trees, the village just in sight. A gipsy's tent stood in a hollow, back from the wayside, and in it lay the shadowy child.

The gipsy man and that weird little woman were in the tent, and from without I heard the ringing of bells and the tramp of horses, smothered and soft, as if each hoof-fall were broken with flowers.

Then I forgot the sick child and stood within the village church. *He* was there standing before the altar, his hand clasped that of the proud lady who had so often wandered through the drama which I was forced to witness. The bridegroom was pale as death, and she looked strangely pallid in the silvery cloud of her brocaded robe. Still she was firm, and I saw that nothing had been confided to her—that the history of my poor mother had never reached the bosom of that proud woman. *He* was resolute, resolute to trample down every right of another in search of his own happiness. Fool !

fool ! happiness will not be thus wickedly wrenched from the hands of the Creator. Even then, before God's altar, he had begun to reap the whirlwind. Coming events cast their shadows all around. No wonder he grew white. No wonder the marriage vows died like snow upon his lips. No wonder that all the bridal blossoms with which the greensward glowed when they went in, had withered beneath the hot sun ! Their dying fragrance fell over the noble pair as they came forth wedded man and wife. Man and wife ! had he forgotten the subterranean vaults beneath the Alhambra, where my mother stood by his side with firmer faith and more devoted constancy than that woman ever knew ? Was that oath forgotten ? No, as he came forth into the sunshine treading down the pale blossoms as he had trampled my mother out of life, a bronzed hand, long and lean as a vulture's claw, was thrust over his path ; and night-shade fell thick among the dead blossoms. He did not see it, for the weird gipsy woman moved like a shadow among the village children ; but he shrunk as if with some hidden pain, and grew paler than before.

The will that controlled mine forced me onward with the newly married pair. I saw him struggle against the leaden memories that would not be swept away. His mournful smile, as he looked on her, was full of saddened love. I could have pitied them but for my mother. I saw what they did not, her grave, that cairn of reddened stones looming before them at every step. They shuddered beneath the invisible shadow, but I knew from whence it fell.

Their route to Greenhurst was trampled over a carpet of flowers ; silver and gold fell like rain among the village children ; the carriage streaming with favors swept by that gipsy tent where the sick child was lying, his child, all unconscious of its double orphanage.

In the thralldom of my intellect I was forced to look on, though my strength was giving way. With shrinking terror I watched the movements of that weird murderess as she crept into Greenhurst, and with the accuracy of a bloodhound stole

through the very apartments my mother had penetrated, crawling like a reptile close to the walls, till she stood upright in the bridal chamber. She concealed herself behind the snowy masses of drapery that fell around the bed.

While her form was shrouded in the heavy waves of silk, her dark face peered, ever and anon, through the transparent lace of the inner curtains like that of a watching fiend.

As one whose senses were locked in a single channel, I too waited and watched. People came in and out of the room, little dreaming of the fiend hidden in the snow of the curtains.

Even in its slavery my spirit sickened as I watched and saw the withered veins of that unearthly wretch swelling with murderous venom, while her victims were moving unconsciously in the next room.

The curtains rustled, that claw-like hand was thrust out, and I saw half a dozen drops flash down like diamonds into a goblet of water that had just been placed on the toilet.

Then a door opened, and the bride entered from her dressing-room alone. In the simple white of her robe she looked touching and lovely, like one subdued and humbled by the depth of her own feelings. The delicate lace of her night coif left a shadow on her temples less deep than that which lay beneath her eyes. Her bosom rose slowly and with suppressed respiration beneath the rich embroidery that embossed her night robe, and her uncovered feet fell almost timidly on the carpet; not with girlish bashfulness, but with a sort of religious awe as one visits a place of prayer afraid to enter.

She knelt down by the bed, and clasping her hands, remained still, as if some prayer lay at the bottom of her heart, which she had not the courage to breathe aloud. The broad, white eyelids were closed, and twice I saw that fiendish face glaring at her through the curtains.

She arose at length, and heaving a deep sigh, stepped into bed. As she sunk to the pillow her eye fell upon the goblet, and resting on one elbow, she reached forth her hand and drank off its contents.

As she fell softly back to the pillows, a hoarse chuckle came through the curtains. She started, turned her face that way, and out came that black head, peering at her with its terrible eyes. A broken sigh, a shudder that made the white drapery rustle as if in a current of wind, and the bride lay with her eyes wide open staring upon the Sibyl.

The dead face grew more and more pallid ; the dark one above glowed and gloated over it like a ghoul. Then the soft light was darkened, and the bridegroom leaned over his bride listening for her breath. As he stooped, the curtains opposite were flung back, the lace torn away, and like an exulting demon the old woman laughed over the living and the dead.

The scene changed, the old woman, the gipsy man and the child were in a tent at midnight. The poor little one, aroused from her torpid rest, looked wildly up as the Sibyl told of her murderous act—told of it and perished in the midst of her triumph—her old age, exhausted by the excitement of her crime, ended in death.

As the life left her body, I felt a shock run through my whole being ; the past was linked with the present. Back to that gipsy tent my memory ran strong and connectedly.

I struggled in the mesmeric hands which guided my energies like steel.

“Peace,” said the man who had enthralled me, “peace, and remember.”

There was a stir in the air as if some unseen bird were fanning it with his wings, a cool and delicious feeling of rest crept over me, and as a child wakes I opened my eyes. The Spanish gipsy stood over me revealed by the quick flashes of lightning that blazed through the room. I knew that he had been my mother’s friend, that the blood in his veins was of her nation and mine. I reached forth my hand. He took it in his, and I sat up.

“You remember all now?” he said—“all that I have revealed to you—all that old Papita bade you forget?”

"Yes, I remember—I know much, but not all ; that which happened before I lived, tell me of that."

"Not yet, you are tired !"

"Yes, but"—

A faintness came over me, my strength had received too great a shock ; for a time I had no power to think or feel.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE DESOLATE BRIDAL CHAMBERS.

AFTER a while, during which I had been stupefied with the very weight of my new existence, the man came close to me and took my hand.

"Child," he said, bending over me till I could see the glitter of his eyes. "Child, are your eyes open ? Is the knowledge complete ?"

"Complete !" I answered, with a shudder.

"Look at me—who am I ? What part have I taken in the past ?"

"You are Chaleco—you loved my mother who fled with *him*. You bore me from the snow mountains, and warmed me in your arms when thoughts of her chilled me to the soul."

"And is that all ?"

"No, the tent. I saw you there when that fierce woman fell dead upon the earth !"

"It is complete," he said, drawing himself up and lifting one hand to heaven, while the lightning glared upon him, "the Egyptian mysteries have lost nothing of their power,—that, which was eternal in Papita lives still in Chaleco. Who shall prevail against one who holds a being like this in his grasp ?

The soul which she put to sleep I awake. Girl of the Caloe, stand up, let me see if the blood of our people is strong in your veins."

I stood upright, planting my feet upon the floor firm as a rock. His words seemed to inspire me with wild vitality. As I looked him in the face quick gleams of lightning shot around us; my soul grew fierce and strong beneath the lurid flashes of his eyes; my own scintillated as with sparks of fire. He spoke.

"Speak—are you Caloe, or of the gentile? Base or brave? Speak the thought that is burning within you. Are you Aurora's child or his?"

My form dilated, my bosom heaved, I felt the hot blood flashing up to my forehead.

"I am Zana, Aurora's child," I answered, with ineffable haughtiness. "The snow that drank her blood quenched the pale drops in my veins."

"Come," cried Chaleco, seizing my hand—"come and see the desolation which her rival left behind. You saw the wedding—your father's wedding—come, now, and look at the home that was to receive the bride."

He went to a fire-place that yawned in the chamber, and fell upon his knees. Directly I heard the clash as of flint and steel driven furiously against each other, and the empty fire-place was revealed by the storm of sparks that broke upon the sculptured stones. His wild impetuosity defeated itself; five or six times he crashed the metal in one hand against the flint which was clenched in the other. At last the fierce sparks centred in a volume, and with a flaming torch in one hand Chaleco stood up.

"You are pale," he said, gazing sternly upon me. "Is this fear?"

"No," I answered, subduing a thrill of awe, as the darkness which had so long enveloped me was driven back in shadows, that hung like funereal drapery in the angles and corners of the chamber—"no, I am not afraid. But that which has been revealed to me may well leave my face white."

He looked at me keenly, holding up the torch till its blaze flamed across my eyes. This scrutiny of my features seemed to satisfy him, for his lip curved till the white teeth gleamed through, and he muttered to himself, "It is right—the blood that has left her face burns in the heart—she is one of us."

Muttering thus, he led the way from the chamber, sending a lurid glare backward from his torch along the damp walls of the circular staircase. Thus breaking through the shadows that gathered thick and close in the old building, he led me on. The tread of his heavy boots resounded through the vast apartments with a defiant clamor. He took no precaution to conceal his torch, which glared back from the closed windows as if the dull glass had been on fire.

We threaded galleries hung with grim old pictures, and peopled with statues, some antiques, some of bronze, and others simply of armor, the iron shells from which warriors had perished. A thrill of awe crept over me as I passed these stern counterfeits of humanity, with their grim hollows choked up with shadows. As the torchlight fell now upon the limb of a statue, now across the fierce visage of a picture, now upon the dull carvings of oak, my imagination increased the desolate grandeur, till marble, iron, and canvas seemed instinct with vitality.

This effect was not diminished by the wild look which Chaleco sent back from time to time, as I followed him.

At last we reached a door, inlaid and empanelled with precious woods. Chaleco attempted to turn the lock. It resisted, and after shaking it fiercely, he dashed one foot against it, which forced the bolt that had rusted in its socket.

"Come in," he said, "you shall see how the widow had prepared for her young bridegroom."

I entered, but the dull atmosphere, the damp, mouldy smell was like that of a tomb. Chaleco held up his torch, throwing its strong light in glaring flashes through the darkness. It had been a superb suit of apartments, hangings of azure silk, stained and black with mildew; Parisian carpets, from which clouds of

dust rose at every foot-tread ; gildings that time had blackened into bronze, filled my gaze with a picture of silent desolation, that made my already worn heart sink heavier and heavier in my bosom.

I shrank back. Chaleco saw it, and urged me on with a grim smile. I remembered the scene of death he had revealed to me in my unnatural sleep, and feared to look upon the place of its actual perpetration.

The chamber we entered had once been all white and superb in its adornments. The walls were yet hung with fluted satin, once rich in snowy gloss, but now striped with black, for accumulations of dust had filled all the flutings. Masses of dusky lace flowed down the windows, and were entangled over the bed with many a dim cobweb, that the spiders had been years weaving among their delicate meshes. Dust and mildew had crept over the bridal whiteness of everything. The couch seemed heaped with shadows ; cobwebs hung low from the gilded cornices that gleamed through them here and there with ghastly splendor.

As Chaleco lifted his torch above the couch, a bat rent its way through the lace, scattering a cloud of dust over us, and remained overhead drearily flapping his impish wings among the cobwebs, till they swayed over us like a thunder-cloud.

"Was it here the old woman killed her ?" I whispered.

"No, she never reached this. It was at Greenhurst."

"Why do you bring me here ?" I said, shuddering.

"That you may see how much power there was in an old woman's curse."

"It is terrible," I whispered, looking around. "My mother, has she not been fearfully avenged ?"

"Avenged !" answered the gipsy ; "do you call this vengeance ? Not till every member of that proud house is in the dust—not till Aurora's child triumphs over them, body and soul, shall Papita's curse be fulfilled !"

His words fell upon me like blows ; they were crushing me to the earth. I thought of George Irving. His treachery

was forgotten ; my heart only remembered his kindness—his love.

“What, all ?” I questioned.

“All ! Poverty, disgrace, death, these are the curses which Papita has left for you to accomplish.”

“For me ?” I questioned, aghast.

“You—yes, it is your inheritance. She left it—I enforce—you accomplish it.”

As he spoke, the bat made a faint noise that struck upon my ear like the amen of a demon, and, sweeping down from his cloud of cobwebs, he made a dash at Chaleco’s torch which was extinguished by his wings.

“Give me your hand !” The gipsy seized my arm as he spoke, and led me onward in the darkness. I followed in silence, rendered desperate by all I had suffered and seen.

At length we reached the open air, and stood together upon the entrance steps. The rain had ceased, the clouds were drifting together in broken masses, leaving fissures and gleams where the cold blue was visible, winding like half frozen rivers between the dull clouds. The dense vegetation, the vines and huge elms were dripping with rain, and every leaf shone like silver when the moon, for a moment, struggled out from the clouds that overwhelmed it.

My horse stood cowering by the steps. The whole force of the storm had beat cruelly upon the poor old fellow.

Chaleco lifted me to his back, and commanding me to wait, went away. Directly he came back, mounted on what appeared to be a spirited horse, which he rode without saddle.

“Come on !” he said, striking Jupiter with his whip, “let’s be moving.”

“Where ?” I questioned, sick at heart with a fear that he would not allow me to return home.

“To your inheritance—to Greenhurst.”

“But that is not my inheritance !”

“You are the child of its lord, and he is dying.”

“But I am not his heiress.”

"Before morning you will have proof that you are his child. You know surely how to work on the repentance of a dying man. Go to him, Zana; this estate and others are his—no claim, no drawback—nothing that the English call an entail on it. One dash of his hand, and it is yours."

"But it was hers, not his—Marston Court belonged to Lord Clare's wife," I said, recoiling from the idea of possessing wealth that had once belonged to my mother's rival.

"It must be wrested from the Clares—it must be an inheritance for you and your people, Zana," he said, riding close to me, as Jupiter picked his way along the broken road, which was left almost impassable by the storm. And he added,

"If that man dies without enriching you and your tribe by the spoils of his marriage, the curse of Papita will fall on you."

"It is here already," I answered, shuddering; "with nothing to trust—nothing to love—deceived, cheated, outraged. What curse can equal this?"

"Have you not deserved it?" he questioned, sternly.

"How?"

"Where was your heart? Had not the blood of our people grown pale in it? Did you give it to a Clare, and hope to go uncursed? The cry of your mother's blood, is it nothing?"

"I did not know it—oh, would to heaven I had never known," was my wild answer. "What am I to do?—how act?"

"Go home—be passive—let the curse work itself out. You know all—tell it to your father."

"It will murder him!" I cried.

"Well!"

The word fell upon my ear like a blow, it was uttered so fiercely.

"Oh, don't!—this conflict—this hardness—it kills me."

"No, there must be death, but not for you, till the work is done."

"Oh, what is this fearful work?"

“Nothing, only wait. Men who know how to wait for vengeance need only be patient and look on. Death is here—I this night give you proofs that will sweep all the wealth Lord Clare controls into his daughter’s lap. Poh! child, revenge is nothing when forced, the soul that knows how to wait need not work.”

I did not comprehend the cold-blooded philosophy of his words—what young heart could? But one thing I did understand; George Irving might be independent of his mother. The property that Chaleco was grasping for me must be wrested from him. A fierce joy possessed me with the thought. If this wealth were offered to me it would place his destiny in my hands. I could withhold or restore independence to the man who had trifled with my orphanage—stolen the friend from my bosom, and uprooted my faith in human goodness. Not for one moment did I dream of taking his inheritance, but there was joy in the thought of humbling him to the dust, by restoring it with my own hands. Too young to comprehend the refined selfishness of this idea, it really seemed that there was magnanimity in this desire to humiliate a man I had loved.

As we rode on toward Greenhurst, my frame began to sink beneath the excitement that nothing human could have supported. My head reeled; the damp branches that swept across my path almost tore me from the saddle. Jupiter too was tired and worn out with the drenching storm. He staggered along the road with his head bent to the ground, ready to drop beneath my insignificant weight. Chaleco saw this, and rode closer to my side just in time to receive me on his arm as I was falling.

Without a word he lifted me to his own horse, and cast Jupiter’s bridle loose.

“Poor old fellow, let him go home,” he said with a laugh; “but as for you and I, Zana, we have more to accomplish yet.”

He held me close with his left arm, grasping the bridle with the same hand. With his right palm upon my forehead, he

rode slowly for a while, till the strength came back to my limbs, and a certain vividness of intelligence possessed me again. Then he spoke.

"Hold tight to me, and be strong. We have lost much time that may be important."

Without waiting for a reply, he put his horse into a sharp canter and sped on, I hardly knew or cared in what direction. At last, he dismounted and placed me upon the ground, asking abruptly if I knew the objects around me. The moon was out just then, and I looked earnestly about. It was the spot where the gipsy tent had been pitched. The spring where I had found Cora, when an infant, flowed softly on in the hollow at a little distance, and before me, where the moonbeams lay like silver upon the wet grass, I saw the meadow which had once been my sole place of refuge.

"You know the place?" said Chaleco; "it was here *she* died. Wait a little."

He searched among the ferns that overhung the bank, which I have described as rising abruptly from the spring, and drew forth a pick-axe and spade covered with rust. A fragment of rock lay imbedded in the bank around which mosses and gorse of many years' growth had crept.

With two or three blows of the pick-axe, he sent this stone crashing down into the water, which rose up in a wild shower all around as it recoiled from the rude mass.

Chaleco shook off the drops like a water-dog, and continued to turn up the earth. Directly he lifted a slab of slate rock, broad, and some inches thick, which certainly could not originally have belonged to the soil in which it lay.

Throwing this slab back, the gipsy fell upon his knees, and, groping downward, brought up a bronze box or coffer, from which he brushed the soil with reverential slowness.

"Loose the key hung around your neck by that chain of hair," he said, holding the box up in the moonlight and searching for the lock.

I started. This was proof undoubted that the gipsy had

never lost a clue to my identity, for no human being, except Maria, was aware that a key of antique gold and platina had always hung around my neck.

I drew it forth with a feeling of awe, and watched in silence while Chaleco fitted it in the lock. It turned with difficulty, grating in the rust, and when the lid gave way, it was with a noise that sounded upon my ear like a moan of suppressed pain.

"What is it?" I said, looking into the open box as one gazes into a coffin after it has been long closed, curious, but yet afraid.

"It is all that you will ever know of her—of your mother!" he answered with a touch of bitter sadness in his voice.

I received the box reverentially in both my hands.

"Take it," said Chaleco, closing the lid; "read them before you sleep!"

"It seems to me that I should never sleep again."

I said this to Chaleco, but he answered me sharply, and thrusting the spade and pick-axe aside with his foot, strode away telling me to follow. The sight of the box I held seemed to irritate him, as the scent of blood excites a wild animal. I folded it to my bosom with both arms, and though it sent a chill through every vein of my body, and made me stagger beneath its weight, I tightened my hold each moment with a painful feeling that I held the very soul of my mother close to mine.

Chaleco strode on in silence. The shadow from his broad leafed hat deepened the sombre gloom of his countenance; the moonlight which struck across the lower part of his face, revealed the ferocious compression of his mouth.

With all my fatigue, I scarcely felt the distance as we walked rapidly through the park. Chaleco did not speak till we came in sight of my home, then he paused and turned.

"Zana," he said, speaking low and huskily—"Zana, remember you have a stern task for this night—your mother's death to revenge—your people's interest to secure. Read and act."

He spoke with an effort, and sprang away as if the presence of any human thing were a torture.

I was in the edge of our garden when he left me. A noise among the shrubs drew me onward, and I found Jupiter lying close to his stable, still saddled, and with the bridle dangling around his head.

I had no room in my heart for compassion, even for the poor old fellow. To have saved his life, I would not have set down my box for a moment ; so I left him and entered the house.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE BRONZE COFFER AND MY MOTHER'S JOURNAL.

A NIGHT lamp burned in the lower entrance, for Turner was still absent, and Maria supposed us both at Greenhurst. I took the lamp and went to my room.

No sense of fatigue—not even the awe that crept over me, could restrain the desire that I felt to examine the box. I placed it on the floor, fell upon my knees, and, with the lamp standing near, lifted the lid.

A quantity of folded papers, and the gleam of antique gold, floated mistily beneath my gaze. My fingers trembled as they touched the papers, yellow with age, and blackened with the written misery of my mother. I took them up, one by one, reverently, and holding my breath. It was long before I could see to distinguish one letter from another. But at last the paper ceased to rattle in my hand—the delicate letters grew distinct, and with eager eyes I devoured them.

At first, the writing was broken in its language and stiff in chirography, like the earnest attempts of a school-girl to write. The sentiments too were imperfectly expressed, and full of wild

fancies that so appealed to my own nature that my heart answered them like an echo.

There was something child-like and exceedingly beautiful in the expressions of happiness, which broke out through all the imperfections of language and style. The poetry of a rich nature, just beginning to yield itself to the influences of civilization, spoke in every word. Never did the records of a human life seem so full of sunshine—never have I seen a register of affection so deep, and of a faith so perfect.

I read eagerly, turning over page after page, and gathering their contents at a glance. The dates changed frequently. At first, they were in Seville, then in various continental cities, where, it seems, Lord Clare had taken her after their flight from Granada, upon whose snow mountains she had at last perished.

Still, the record continued one of unbroken happiness. She invariably mentioned Lord Clare as her husband ; but now and then came an expression of anxiety for the thoughtfulness that would, at times, resist all her efforts to amuse him. As the manuscript progressed, it was easy to trace the development of a vigorous mind under the influence of an intellect more powerful than itself. There was a break in the manuscript. The next date was indefinite. No town, no county, but simply the hills of Scotland.

Oh, how beautiful was the gush of affection with which she spoke of her infant ! How thoroughly maternal joy expanded and deepened every feeling of her womanhood ! Still it was here that I found the first trace of that sorrow which soon darkened every page. Her warm heart was dissatisfied with the measured affection with which Lord Clare received his child. She questioned the cause, finding it only in herself—her want of power to interest wholly a mind like his. She wrote of two old people who were kind to her and her little one, while Lord Clare was abroad on the hills, or absent on some of those long journeys which he occasionally made into England.

Again the scene changed, and she was at Greenhurst, so happy, so more than pleased with the beauty and comforts of the home

which promised to be permanent at last. She described the dwelling, the rooms, with their exquisite adornments, the statuettes and pictures, with the glow of a vivid mind and warm heart. She spoke of her child—the pretty room that was prepared for it—the devotion of a woman whom Lord Clare had procured from Spain. How fearfully strange it seemed that I was the child so loved and cared for ; that even then I was acting my part in the mournful drama that had left me worse than an orphan ! How often did I find myself described, my eyes, the flowing wealth of my curls, the precocious vigor of my mind !

On a sudden the whole character of the manuscript changed ; the delicate writing grew abrupt and broken ; wild dashes appeared where sentences should have been, and a spirit of sadness pervaded every written word. She no longer spoke of Lord Clare with the exulting love that had, at first, marked her record ; and every time her child was mentioned, the name seemed written in tears. Still it was but the shadow of unhappiness that appeared. No broad mention of discontent was written, but a foreboding of evil, a dread of impending bereavement fell upon the heart with every sentence.

At last it came. Lord Clare, her husband, loved another—had loved another long before he found her, a poor Gitanilla, in the ruins of the Alhambra.

With what a burst of anguish the truth was written ! How terrible it must have looked, glaring on her in words formed by her own hand ! Poor thing—she had attempted to dash the sentence out, but the quivering hand had only scattered it with blots ; soiling the records as with mourning, but not obliterating a single word.

After this, there was no connection between the wild snatches of anguish—the pathetic despair—the pleadings for a return of love which were written in all the eloquence of desperation, and blistered with tears that stained its surface yet.

Trouble blinded my eyes as I read. My hands trembled as they grasped the paper on which her tears had fallen. My

soul was full of my mother—tortured by her grief—swelling fiercely with a bitter sense of her wrongs.

I read on to the end. All my mother's history was before me—I saw her as she described herself, a wild dancing girl of Granada, thrown upon the notice of a romantic and imaginative young man—that gipsy marriage in the caverns of the Alhambra was before me in all its dismal terrors. Was it a marriage, or a deception by which my mother was betrayed? Whatever it was, *she* believed it to be real. No doubt that she was Lord Clare's wife ever appeared, but, in the last page, the cry of her wronged love broke out in one fierce burst of sorrow. The certainty that he loved another—had never entirely loved her—uprooted the very fibres of life. She never wrote rationally after that.

"I will go," she wrote, and great drops as of rain blotted out half the words—"I will go to him once more, and tell him of my oath. Surely, surely he will not let me die—me, his wife, his poor Gitanilla, whose beauty is not all gone yet. This woman, does she love him as I do? Will she give up?—oh, Heaven forgive me, I gave up nothing! What had I to yield, a poor, dancing gipsy, with nothing on earth that was her own, but the beauty of which he is tired, and the heart he is breaking? But she, this woman with one husband in the grave—what can she offer that Aurora did not give? Still, oh, misery, misery, he loves her—I can see it. He thinks me blind, unconscious, content with the sparse hours that he deals out grudgingly to me and my child. Content! well, well, it may not be. I have read of jealous hearts that create by wayward suspicions the evil they dread. What if I were one of them? Oh, heavens, what happiness if it rested thus with me! Let me hope—let me hope! * * * *

"It is over, he has struck my child—the blow has reached my heart. *She* is at his dwelling—I too will enter it—I too will strike. Have I not sworn an oath that must be redeemed? *His* oath is forgotten. The gipsies remember better. * * *

"She sleeps in his house to-night; I will be there! How

wakeful the child is ! How wild and fiery are the eyes with which she has been watching me from that heap of cushions ! They are closed, and I will steal away. But how come back ? Will it be the last time ? * * * *

"I have seen them both—he has told me all. He never loved me as he loved her, not even then, among those ruins. Never loved me ! O, my God ! am I mad to repeat these words over and over, as the suicide, frantic with the first blow, plunges the dagger again and again in his bosom ? Why cannot words kill like daggers ? They pierce deeper—they torture worse ; but we live. Yes, if this pang could not wrench life away, nothing can reach this stubborn hold on existence. He has said it with his own lips—I am not loved—through all his life that woman has ever stood between me and him. I rose from my knees then and stood up. Did I entreat ? No, no ! Perhaps he expected it—perhaps he thought the abject gipsy blood would creep to his feet yet. * * * *

"Why was Zana waiting in the darkness of that house ? How much her eyes looked like those of my grandame. Ha ! my oath. It is well I kept silent there. Have I not sworn that nothing but death shall separate us two ? Let them live, the despised gipsy has the courage to die. Zana, my child, gather up your strength, many dreary miles stretch between us and the caves of Granada, but death is there. Without his love, my poor little one, what can we do but die ?" * * *

Here the manuscript ended. But upon one of its blank pages was written, in another hand, words that froze the tears in my heart.

It was a stern command to forsake the people of my father's blood ; and after avenging my mother's death, return to my own tribe for ever. The words were strong with bitter hate, that seemed to burn into the paper on which they were written. The fearful document was signed PAPITA.

The papers dropped from my hand. I remember sitting, like one stupefied, gazing down upon a pile of gold that nearly filled the coffer, fascinated by the glitter of two antique ear-rings, set

with great rubies, that glowed out from the mass like huge drops of blood that had petrified there. I took them up and clasped them in my ears ; their history was written out in the manuscript I had just read ; and I locked them with a sort of awe. They seemed a fearful link that was to drag me back to my people.

While I searched among the gold for some other token, a strange stupor crept over me, and I fell exhausted on the floor, folding my arms over the bronze box and its contents.

I slept heavily for hours, so heavily that all the sweet noises of morning failed to arouse me. This suspension of consciousness probably saved me from a brain fever, or perhaps utter frenzy. It seems that I had locked myself in, and all day Maria, unconscious of my return, had not thought of looking for me till Turner came home, for a moment, to inquire after us. He found Jupiter still saddled, wandering around the wilderness, hungry and forlorn enough. This excited his fears, and, directly, the faithful old man was knocking at my chamber door. The noise was not enough to arouse me, and receiving no answer he grew desperate, and forcing an entrance, found me prone upon the carpet with my arms around the bronze coffer, my soiled garments lying in torn masses around me, and my pale features gleaming out from beneath the scarlet kerchief, with which I had confined the riding-hat to my head.

The stillness of death itself was not more profound than the sleep into which I had fallen ; but at last the gushes of fresh air they let in upon me, aromatic vinegars, and the desperate shake that Turner gave me in his terror, had their effect. I stood up, stiffened in every limb and in a sort of trance ; for all consciousness was locked like ice in my bosom.

Slowly, and with many pangs, the remembrance of what had happened came back to me. The bronze coffer at my feet—the sight of my garments, brought back a consciousness of all that I had learned and suffered during the night. I took up the coffer and placed it, reverently, on a table. Turner and Maria watched me, with anxious curiosity. The box was a

singular one, and covered with Egyptian hieroglyphics, into which the red soil of the bank had introduced itself. I took no heed of Turner's astonishment ; but, self-centred and stern, asked him if Lord Clare—I did not call him father—still lived.

"Yes," answered the old man, and all his features commenced to quiver, "he lives—he has asked for you again and again. Where have you been, Zana?"

I did not reply. The stern duty that lay upon me hardened all my senses ; the old man's right to question me passed for nothing. I asked what time it was, as if he had not spoken.

It was four in the afternoon. Lord Clare had inquired for me so often, that Turner determined, spite of Lady Catherine's prohibition, to bring me to his presence.

"Go," said the old man, gently—"go change that dress, and drive, if it is possible, that deathly white from your cheek ; there is no resemblance now between you and *her* ; that icy face will disappoint him. Look like yourself, Zana—like *her* !"

I went at his bidding and changed my dress, and braided my hair with fingers as stiff and, it seemed to me, as nerveless as iron. The pallor did not leave my cheek ; the blood flowed still and icily in my veins ; all the sweet impulses of humanity seemed dead within me. I remembered a scarlet ribbon which lay in the box, with a piece of gold attached. The journal had given me its history. The gold was my father's first gift to his gipsy wife. I remembered well finding the ribbon in his vest, and carrying it away with a sharp infantile struggle, full of glee and baby triumph. He allowed me to keep it. Yet it was her dearest maiden ornament—the earliest sacrifice that she had made to him. The event was impressed on my mind, because it brought forth the first angry word that I ever remember from my mother. On seeing me come forward, holding up the ribbon, and shouting as it floated behind me, I remember well the quick flash of her eyes, the eager bound which she made toward me, and the clutch of her hand as she wrested away my treasure.

My father laughed lightly at the struggle, but she bore the ribbon away, and did not appear again for hours.

As this memory pressed upon my mind, I entered the room where Turner awaited me, took out the ribbon, and hung it with the gold around my neck.

"Do I look like *her* now?" I said, turning upon the old man with steady coldness.

He did not reply. His distended eyes were fixed on the antique rings in my ears—a sort of terror possessed him at the sight.

"Zana, where did you get those accursed things?" he said.

I did not answer, but took my mother's journal from the coffer and closed the lid over the gold.

Turner followed me from the room, evidently filled with awe by the cold stateliness of my demeanor.

With a heart harder than the nether millstone, I entered the house which held my dying father. No misgivings of humanity possessed me—my soul was cruel in its purpose, and my footsteps fell like iron upon the tessellated vestibule.

Upon the staircase we met Lady Catherine Irving. She confronted me with her impatient wrath and ordered me back, denouncing Turner for having introduced me a second time against her commands. I listened till she had done, and then sternly pursued my way, leaving Turner behind.

I opened the door of Lord Clare's chamber. A voice from the bed, feeble and sharp as that of an old man, called out :

"Turner, Turner, is it you? Have you found the child?"

I strode up to the bed and bent over the dying man. My hair almost touched his forehead. The glow of his great, feverish eyes spread, like fire, over my face.

When he saw me that sharp face began to quiver, and over each cheek there darted a burning spot, as if a red rose leaf had unfurled upon it. He lifted his long arms, and would have clasped them over my neck, but they fell back, quivering, upon the bed. With his lips drawn apart, and the glitter of his

eyes growing fearful, he lay gazing at the ruby rings that weighed down my ears.

"Those, those!—the rubies! How came they here?—what demon has locked them into those ears? Out with them, Zana—out with them, they are accursed!"

He held up those pale hands and grasped eagerly at the earrings; but I drew back, standing upright by his bed.

"They are my inheritance," I said; "touch them not."

"They are accursed," he faltered, struggling to his elbow, "the symbols of treachery and blood—they were in *her* ears—the sorceress—the poisoner—they were in her ears that night."

"I know it. They belonged to old Papita, the grandame of my mother, the Gitanilla whom you married in the vaults of the Alhambra. I am her child."

"And mine!" he cried, casting up his arms as he fell backward upon the pillows.

I drew back, repulsing those quivering arms with a motion of my hand. They fell heavily upon the bed-clothes. A groan burst from his lips, and, from beneath his closed eyelids, I saw two great tears roll slowly downward.

For one moment the heart within me was stirred with an impulse of compassion. I removed the red ribbon from my neck and flung it over his, the pure offering of my soul. He grasped the gold with both hands and held it against his heart, muttering faint prayers to himself. I took one of the pale hands in mine; the touch softened me still more. The word father trembled on my lips—another moment and I must have fallen on my knees by his side. But that instant Lady Catherine Irving laid her hand on my arm.

"Go!" she said, in a hoarse whisper. "Insolent, begone!"

I shook off her detested touch and drew myself sternly up.

"Hence, woman!" I exclaimed, pointing to the door with my hand—"hence; and leave me alone with my father!"

She turned livid with rage, but kept her ground, attempting to force me from the bed; but she might as well have tried her puny strength on a rock.

"Catherine, go, it is my child," said a faint voice from the bed; "leave us together."

"It is against the physician's orders—his mind wanders—it is madness!" exclaimed the woman, addressing Turner, who followed her; "you will bear witness, good Turner, that at the last his mind wandered."

Lord Clare's eyes opened, and were bent, with a look of ineffable love, upon my face.

"My child—my child!" he murmured, repeating the name as if the sound were sweet to him. Then looking at Turner, he whispered, "There must be some new proof. Those rings, take them from her—for, before the God of heaven, she is my own child."

"He raves—he is insane!" cried Lady Catherine, attempting to push me aside.

I have said that my heart was hard as a rock when I entered that chamber. A moment of tenderness had softened it, but the presence of this woman petrified it again. Still I could not share in this unholy strife around my father's death-bed without a shudder. My very soul revolted from the contest which might ensue if I persisted in remaining. I took the hand which had been feebly extended toward me, and pressed the journal of my mother into its clasp. He lifted up the papers, held them waving before his eyes, and muttering, "It is hers—it is hers!" cowered down into the bed and began to moan.

"What papers are those?" almost shrieked Lady Catherine, attempting to possess them, but the dying man dragged them beneath the bed-clothes. "It is forbidden him to read—he shall not attempt it!"

Lord Clare started up in bed, and pointed his long, shadowy finger toward the door.

"Woman," he cried, in a voice that made her creep slowly backward—"woman, intermeddle no more—leave me with these papers and my God!"

The astonished and terrified woman crept abjectly from the room, with her pallid face averted.

Lord Clare sat upright, unfolding the yellow and time-stained journal of my mother with his shaking hands.

"Fling back the curtains," he cried. "Nay, nay, my eyes are dim—bring lights—bring lights. Ha, yes, that is the sunset, let me read it by the last sun I shall ever see!"

Turner had drawn back the bed curtains, twisting them in masses around the heavy ebony posts. But this was not enough, with a sweep of his arms he sent all the glowing silk away from the nearest window, letting in a burst of the golden sunset.

And by this light my dying father began to read the records of the heart he had broken. It was terrible to witness the eagerness with which his glittering eyes ran over the paper. New vitality had seized upon him: he sat upright and firm as an oak in the bed, which had quivered to his nervous trembling a few minutes before.

I had entered the room determined to spare no pang to the dying man—to shrink from nothing that might send back an avenging torture for all that he had dealt to my mother, but I was young and I was human. The blood that beat in his almost pulseless heart flowed in my veins also. I could not look upon him there—so pale, so full of deathly beauty—and be his executioner. I turned away resolved to spare him the details of my mother's death. I met Lady Catherine again upon the stairs, and she shrunk back from me as if I had been a viper. It gave me no pain—I was scarcely conscious of her presence.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE SHADOWY DEATH-CHAMBER.

I AWOKE in the night from a broken and unhealthy sleep. Turner's voice, and the tramp of Jupiter outside my window had aroused me. I raised the sash, and looked out in time to see the old man throw himself on Jupiter's back and ride swiftly away. Just then the clock chimed three.

I could not sleep again. A remembrance of the scene by my father's death-bed—the knowledge that now he had full proof that I was indeed his child, came with startling acuteness to my mind. I reflected that in that house my mother had lived her brief period of happiness, and known the anguish that at last drove her to death. Never had I felt her memory so keenly, or her presence so near. A craving desire to draw my soul closer to hers by material things seized upon me. The room which I could remember her to have occupied, and that had been so often alluded to in her journal, had never been opened since she left it. Turner and Maria avoided the very passage which led to it, and I had shared somewhat in this spirit of avoidance. Now a desire possessed me to visit that room. The key was lost, Turner had often told me that, but bolts were of little consequence to me then. I dressed hurriedly and let myself into the garden. Around the old stone balcony the vines had run riot for years, weaving themselves around the heavy balustrades in fantastic and leafy masses.

I tore these vines asunder, laying the old steps bare and scattering them with dead leaves, as I made my way to the balcony, which was literally choked up with the silky tufts of the clematis vines, run to seed, and passion flowers out of blossom. The nails, grown rusty in the hinges, gave way as I pulled at

the shutters closed for years and years. Then the sash-door yielded before me, and I stood in the room my mother had inhabited ; and for the first time trod its floor since she left it on that bitter, bitter night. How well I remembered it ! Then I had stood by her side a little child ; now I was a woman alone in its desolation. I sat down in the darkness till the first tints of dawn revealed all its dreary outlines. A pile of cushions lay at my feet, and gleams of the original crimson came up through the dust. On those cushions I had crouched, watching her through my half-shut lashes as she sat in the easy-chair, meditating her last appeal to the merciless heart of her husband.

A cashmere shawl, moth-eaten, and, with its gorgeous tints almost obliterated, hung over the chair, sweeping the dim carpet with its dusty fringes. Pictures gleamed around me through a veil of dust ; and vases full of dead flowers stood on the mosaic tables. When I touched the leaves they crumbled to powder beneath my fingers. I beat the cushions free from their defacement, and reverently shook out the folds of my mother's shawl. These were the objects she had touched last, and to me they were sacred. The rest I left in its dreariness, glad that time and creeping insects had spread a pall over them.

Seated in her chair, I watched the dawn break slowly over the garden. It seemed as if I were waiting for something—as if some object, sacred to her memory, had called me to that room, and placed me in that chair. It was a dull morning. Tints that should have been rosy took a pale violet hue in the east. The birds were beginning to wake up, but as yet they only moved dreamily in the leaves. No wind was astir, and the shadows of night still lay beneath the trees of the wilderness. The stillness around was funereal.

Unconsciously I listened. Yet whom could I expect ? What human being ever entered that room sacred to the memory of one unhappy woman ?

At length there came upon this stillness a sound that would have startled another, but I sat motionless and waited. It was like the struggling of some animal through the flower thickets

—the unequal tread of footsteps—short pauses and quick gasps of breath. Then a feeble sound of some one clambering up the steps, and there, upon the balcony, stood my father.

My heart ceased to beat ; for the universe I could not have moved or spoken. He was dressed so strangely, his under garments all white as snow, with that gorgeous gown of Damascus silk flowing over. His head was bare, and the locks curled over the pallid forehead, crisped with a dampness that I afterwards knew was the death sweat.

He stood within the window, with those great, burning eyes bent on me. Their look was unearthly—their brightness terrible ; but there was no shrinking in my heart. I hardened under it as steel answers to the flame.

After shaking the dust from my mother's shawl, I had laid it back upon the chair as it was at first ; but when I sat down the folds were disturbed, and fell around my shoulders, till, unconsciously, I had been draped with them much as was my mother's custom. Thus I appeared before her husband and my father, ignorant of the appalling likeness that struck his dying heart to the centre.

He stood for a whole minute in the sheltered window, never turning his eyes a moment from my face. Then with a feeble stillness, taking each step as a child begins to walk, he glided toward me, and, sinking on his knees at my feet, took my two hands softly in his, and laid his damp forehead upon them.

“Aurora—Aurora, forgive me, forgive her—I am dying—I am dying !—she wronged you unconsciously.”

It sounds in the depths of my soul yet—the pàthetic anguish of those words ! I could not move : my lips clung together : a stillness like that of the grave fell over us both. He had taken me, the implacable child, for the wronged mother ; his cold lips lay passive upon my hands, and I had no power to fling them off.

He meekly lifted his head. Those burning eyes were filled with tears, in which they seemed to float like stars reflected in water.

"You will not speak it, Aurora, and I am dying?" he murmured, clasping his arms over my neck, and drawing his head upward to my bosom, till I could feel the sharp, quick pants of his heart close to mine. "I have been years and years searching for the thing forgiveness; and now when your lips alone can speak it, they will not! I am waiting, Aurora—but you will not let me die! To wait is torture—but you will not speak!"

O my God, forgive me! but the black blood of Egypt rose like gall in the bottom of my heart, when he spoke of torture in that prayerful, broken-hearted manner. I forgot him, though he lay heavy as death upon my bosom, and thought only of the real torture under which she, for whom I was mistaken, had perished. My heart rose hard and strong, repelling the feeble flutter of his with the heave of an iron shaft.

"It is not Aurora—I am not your gipsy wife, Lord Clare, but her child—the foundling of your servant—the scoff of your whole race. I am Zana!"

"Zana!" he repeated, lifting his eyes with a bewildered and mournful look, "that was our child; but Aurora, how many times shall I ask where is she? Have I not come all this weary way to find her? Where is she, Zana?"

"I gave you her journal," I said.

"Yes, yes, I have it here under my vest: you will find it by and by, but let it be a little while. She, Aurora, herself, this writing is not forgiveness; and I say again; child, I am dying!"

"I have nothing but what she has written," I answered, shrinking from his questions as if they had been poniards.

"But she does not tell all—not a word since that night. She was going somewhere—she talked about dying, but that is not easy, Zana—see how long I have been about it, and not dead yet. Tell me what she has been doing since that miserable, miserable night."

"Ask her in Eternity!" I said, attempting to free myself from his embrace. "If the dead forgive, ask forgiveness of her there."

He drew back upon his knees, supporting himself by the marble pressure of his hands upon my arms.

"Dead. Is Aurora dead?" fell in a whisper from his white lips. "Is she waiting for me there?"

"She is dead!" I answered.

"When, how, where did she die?" he questioned, with sudden energy, and a glitter of the eye that burned away all the tears.

I hesitated one minute—an evasion was on my lips. I could not tell him how his victim had died; it was striking a poniard into the last struggles of waning life. Suffering from the agony of his look I turned my head away; the fringe of my mother's shawl caught in the ruby ear-rings that were swayed by the motion. A fiery pain shot through my temple; the gipsy blood ran hot and bitterly in my veins. His voice was in my ear again, feeble, but commanding.

"Speak—how did Aurora die?"

The answer sprung like burning lava to my lips. I forgot that it was a dying man to whom I spoke. My words have rung back to my own soul ever since, clear and sharp as steel.

"Your wife—my mother—was stoned to death by her tribe in the snow mountains back of Granada!"

My father sprang to his feet. For a moment he stood up, stiff and stark, like a marble shaft: then he reeled forward and fell prone upon the cushions, with a cry that made every nerve in my body quake.

That cry, that prostrate form, O God forgive me! barbarian that I was—my voice had smitten him to the soul. I, his only child, had fiendishly hurled him down to die! I looked upon him where he lay, ghastly and quivering, like a shot eagle, among the cushions. All the sweet memories of my infancy came back: a remembrance of the first tender kisses those lips had pressed on my forehead, seemed burning there in curses of my cruelty. I knelt down beside him, humbled to the dust, racked with an anguish so scathing, that while I

longed to perish by his side, it seemed as if I were doomed to live on forever and ever.

I felt a shudder creep over his limbs as I bent over and touched him.

"Father, O my father!" I cried, in terrible anguish, "speak! say that I have not killed you!"

He did not speak; he did not move; his eyes were closed; his pale hand lay nerveless upon the carpet. An awful chill crept over me. I felt like a murderess stricken with the first curse of my crime.

Noises came from the balcony, people were scrambling up the steps, probably aroused by that fearful cry. I heard Turner's voice—other persons were with him. One a professional-looking man, who held a roll of paper in his hand; another followed, carrying an inkstand bristling with pens. The first man sat down by a table, upon which some vases stood, and, unrolling a parchment, looked keenly at Turner.

"Awake him gently, there is no time to lose; this terrible effort must soon terminate all."

Turner knelt down by his master, and I drew back, waiting breathlessly for him to speak; my very salvation seemed hanging on his first word. How white he grew; how those old hands shook as they touched the pale fingers that had fallen over the cushion! It was a long time before that good old man could master the tears that swelled to his throat. The stillness was profound. No one stirred; the barrister sat with one hand pressed on the will he had come to execute; the other held the pen suspended motionless.

"Will he sign now?" questioned the man, in a low voice; "it is all that is wanting."

Turner stood up, and his white face was revealed to the barrister, who began to roll up the parchment.

"Good heavens, is it so?" he exclaimed, in a suppressed voice, "and in this strange place."

"My master, O my master!" cried Turner, falling upon his knees, and crying aloud in his anguish as he lifted the pale

hand of the dead, and laid it reverently on the still bosom, "oh, would to God I had died for thee!"

I looked on the old man with wonder and envy. He could weep, but I was frozen into stone—he could touch the beloved hand; I was afraid even to look that way. The curse of my gipsy inheritance was upon me; the first act in the great drama of vengeance was performed, and it had left me branded, heart and soul. I sat cowering in the shadows like a criminal, not like the avenger of a great wrong. I had built up walls of granite between myself and the dead, I, his only child.

The rush of all these thoughts on my brain stifled me. I could no longer endure the presence of the living nor the dead, but arose and descended into the garden. Turner followed me, weeping, and evidently with a desire to comfort me. I, wishing to avoid him, was still held by a sort of fascination under the windows of the death-chamber. A litter stood beneath the balcony, on which a mattress had been placed; I knew what it was for, and lingered near it with my eyes uplifted to the room above. There was a faint conversation, smothered whispers, and a muffled tread of feet upon the carpet.

I know not how or whence she came, but Maria stood by me, with her hands clasped in the shock of a first terrible surprise, tearless and hushed, a picture of mute sorrow. We were both looking upward. We saw them as they lifted him from the cushions, and bore him forward over the trampled vines to the broken steps. The faces of these men wore a look of stern sorrow. They descended, very slowly, while Turner stood below with arms uplifted, prepared to receive the dead.

The men paused, half-way down the steps, to free a portion of the Oriental gown which had entangled itself in the balustrade. Just then, a first beam of the sunrise fell across that marble face. Oh, how beautiful it was! how mournfully beautiful! Dim blue shadows lay around the closed eyelids. The deathly white of the forehead gleamed out from the golden auburn of his hair and beard, which the sunshine struck aslant, and the wind softly stirred in terrible contrast with the stillness

of the face and limbs. A look of holy quiet, more heavenly than a smile, hovered around his mouth ; the very winds of morning seemed unholy for disturbing the solemn stillness that lay upon him.

Once more I passed the threshold of my father's house—the threshold upon which I had slept a child-beggar and an infant outcast ; for the first time I trod over the spot not only without bitterness, but in humility of soul. I followed the dead body of my father, whose love I had repulsed, whose repentance I had rejected. That one idea drove all the evil blood from my heart. I would have crept after him on my knees before every proud remnant of his race, could the act have appeased this thought within me.

It was early in the morning, so early that not even a servant was astir. The men trod lightly over the marble vestibule and up the broad staircase ; after that thick carpets muffled their steps ; and thus our mournful group entered Lord Clare's chamber without disturbing a soul in the house.

Even young Morton, that had been left to watch with him when old Turner went away, was not aroused from the deep slumber which had overtaken him, in an easy-chair wheeled to a remote corner of the room.

Life had passed out, and death entered the room, while that man slept on his post.

They laid my father on his bed, and then gathered in a group near the window, pallid and anxious, conversing together. At times whispers are more distinct than words. I heard all. The lawyer had a parchment roll still in his hand. Turner looked wistfully at it, then at me.

"No, it is of no more value than blank paper," said the lawyer, answering the look ; "and worse, the old will, which would have given Marston Court to young Morton, its rightful owner, was destroyed in anticipation of this. Lady Catherine sweeps every thing !"

"It was not that," said Turner, "but his memory ; let it be saved from idle gossip. It is only known to us that my lord left

this room last night. Why make the manner or place of his death a wonder for people that have no right to inquire about it?"

"We can be silent," answered the lawyer, looking at his clerk.

"Do, for the sake of all who loved him; and this parchment, it is useless; let us forget it. We know that his last wish was to provide for her poor, poor child."

Turner beckoned that I should advance, as he spoke.

"Zana," he said, taking the parchment, "*he* would have made you rich. In this will, he left a large property to you; had he lived only a few minutes longer, all would have been well. But God, who has made you an orphan, leaves you still with old Turner. In this will, and to me also, Lord Clare admits you to be his child. Shall it be so proclaimed? So far the secret rests with us. Shall we darken his memory with it?"

Oh, how thankful I was for this power to atone in a little for the cruelty of my acts! For the first time that day tears came to my eyes.

"Save his memory," I said; "let me remain an outcast. No word or look of mine shall darken his name."

This resolution reconciled me somewhat to myself. I stole toward the bed, and through my tears gazed upon that marble face.

"Oh, my father, can you hear me?" I murmured. "It is your child—not the demon who refused to forgive—but you *are* forgiven. In eternity you have seen the wronged one, and instead of curses she has filled your immortality with blessings. I see them upon this face, that in its ineffable calm forgives even me, who was implacable."

The broken sobs and murmurs in which I uttered these words of grief awoke young Morton, who arose and came toward the window. Turner advanced.

"Let some one arouse the family, the Earl of Clare is dead."

Morton turned deathly pale, and almost staggered as he went out to perform this mournful duty.

CHAPTER XLVI.

A VISIT TO MY ARCH ENEMY.

DIRECTLY the chamber was filled. Weeping domestics crowded the ante-room. Lady Catherine and her son stood by the death couch ; the mother lost in noisy grief ; the young man white and tearless as the dead face upon which he gazed.

As Lady Catherine removed the embroidered handkerchief from her face, her eyes fell upon me, where I stood by the window near the strange lawyer. Her face flushed, and she came toward us.

"How long has this girl been in Lord Clare's chamber? How dare she insult our grief by intruding here?"

She spoke hurriedly, casting eager glances at the parchment which the lawyer still held.

"She came with me—she saw him when he died," answered the old man.

"And were you here also?" questioned Lady Catherine, sharply, of the lawyer.

He bowed.

The lady forgot her tears and the grief, which, at first, had disturbed the sacred quiet of that death-chamber.

"Did he send for you?" she continued.

"He did, my lady."

"And for her?" she cried, with a disdainful wave of the hand toward me.

"His last wish was to see her."

This evasive, but lawyer-like reply, irritated her afresh.

"What is that in your hand?" she cried ; and taking even this wary man by surprise, she reached forth her hand, secured

the parchment, and eagerly unrolled it. She began to read ; her thin lips grew almost imperceptible ; and her light blue eyes, the most cruel color on earth, when filled with malice, became repulsive as those of a venomous reptile. They darted from line to line, growing fiercer and more hideous each instant, till her face became perfectly colorless.

At last her eyes dropped to the bottom of the document, a glare of delight shot from them, and striking the parchment with her open hands, she looked round upon us, with a smile of triumphant malice, horrible in that place and presence

"It is not signed—it was not his work, but yours !" she cried, forgetting all respect for the dead in her fiendish exultation. "Go forth, one and all, your presence here is an insult !"

She waved her hand haughtily. But the lawyer and his clerk alone answered it. She still pointed her finger toward the door. Turner withstood the gesture firmly, but still with that respect which men of his class habitually render to those of superior station.

"Madam," he said, "you have seen it written by his own order that this young girl was Lord Clare's child. Surely it cannot be that you wish her sent altogether from his dwelling while he is lying there?"

"I deny it ; there is no proof that she is his child," she retorted, pale with anger, and casting a furtive look at the bed, as if she feared those marble lips might move and contradict her. "What proof is there in an unsigned paper drawn up at a distance, and without his knowledge?"

"Before God and before the dead !" answered Turner, looking upward, and then bowing his forehead solemnly toward the death couch, "Clarence, Lord Clare, told me with his own lips, not twelve hours ago, that this child, Zana, was his daughter, proven so entirely to his satisfaction. By his orders, and at his dictation, I took down all that is in that unsigned will, and myself carried it to the lawyer, who hastened to put it in form."

"It is false ; had this been true Lord Clare would have signed it."

"He was dead when we came back," answered Turner.

I saw her lips move, those thin, pale lips. made a movement, as if they would have said, "Thank God !" But in the awful presence of death she dared not force them to utter the blasphemy in words.

All this time George Irving had been so overwhelmed by the sudden shock of his uncle's death, that he seemed entirely unconscious of what was passing. But at last the sharp tones of his mother's voice aroused him, and he came forward with one hand slightly uplifted. "Hush !" he said, "this is no place for words."

His mother looked at him with a half sneer.

"Do you know that this creature and her miserable old father have been plotting to disgrace our name, to steal away your birthright, George?"

"I only know that we are in the presence of death," answered the young man, solemnly. "Madam, let me lead you away, this agitation will make you ill."

"No—not while these vipers remain," she answered.

This scene had, from the first, wounded me as if every word had been a blow ; but my heart received as a blessing every fresh pang, for it seemed as if by pain I could make atonement for all I had inflicted on the dead. But I could now no longer endure it. Without a word, and with one mournful glance at the beautiful marble that had been my father, I went forth alone. Turner resisted ; not all the malice of that bad woman could move him from the side of that death-couch—command and insult were alike futile. Until the day of the funeral the old man remained by his master, still as a shadow, faithful as truth.

It was a miserable time with me after this. I wandered around that dwelling like a haunting and haunted spirit. They had laid my father out in state, and the meanest villager could pass in and look upon him ; but I, his only child, driven away

like a dog, could only look upon the walls that held him afar off, and through blinding tears. Still I said to myself it is right. Let me have patience with this cruelty—I who would not be merciful, who refused forgiveness, as if I were a god to judge and avenge, should learn to suffer. With the memory of his death green in my heart, I thought that the bitterness of my nature was all gone, and gloried like a martyr in the persecutions that threatened me.

At last I grew weary with watching. Maria strove to comfort me, but her own kind heart was full of grief, and we could only weep together and wish for old Turner.

But we had friends who did not quite forsake us, though it was known that even sympathy in our sorrow would be held as a cause of offence with Lady Catherine, who was now a peeress in her own right, and lady of Greenhurst.

The curate and my precious Cora came to us at once. They had seen Turner at his post, and knowing the danger, came without concealment to comfort us. Cora did not seem well. Her sweet mouth was unsteady, as if with more than sudden grief. Those pale blue shadows lay beneath her beautiful eyes, that I could never see without a feeling that an overflow of tears had left them there.

She was very gentle, and affectionate as a child, striving with her pretty ways and sweet words to win me from the sternness of my grief. I felt this gratefully, but had no power to express the sense that I really felt of her kindness. As one answers and feels the pity of a child, I received the sympathy that she came to give. Would that it had been otherwise, would that I had treated her as a woman full of rich, shy, womanly feelings; in that time of confidence and tears she might have been won to trust in me entirely. But there was the old feeling of suspicion in my heart. We shared our tears together, but nothing else. The sweet, motherless girl had no encouragement to open her heart, even if it had been her wish. In the selfishness of my grief I forgot everything else.

With Mr. Clark it was otherwise. His counsels, his gentle-

ness and patience were so true, so beautifully sincere, that I could not but yield to them. I told him all—my night at Marston Court, the papers which Chaleco had unearthed, and my last, cruel interview with Lord Clare. But the good man could give me no counsel here. His life had been too isolate, too tranquil for power to cope with, or even understand these wild events. He was shocked by the revengeful character of Chaleco, and urged me with tears never to see this man again.

“Come to us,” said the good man—“come and learn to love God peacefully with Cora and your old friend. The little parsonage is large enough; it held three once, you know,” he added, with tender mournfulness; “and I sometimes think Cora still pines for her mother, as I do. Our home is very sad of late years, and you seldom come now, Zana.”

“I will come to you, more than ever if they will let me,” I answered, touched by his sadness, and filled with remorse, for having, in a great degree, forsaken his dwelling the moment a jealous doubt of Cora entered my mind.

“Drive all this wild man’s advice from your mind,” continued he; “see how it embittered the last moments of your father’s life—those precious moments which God had bestowed that they might be filled with paternal blessings. Flee from this evil man, Zana.”

There was something in the simplicity and gentleness with which this advice was given that touched my heart; while a haughty faith in my own more daring character made me receive it with forbearance rather than respect. But just then all opposition was passive in my bosom. I was silent, and he thought me convinced.

In some things this strangely good man was full of resolution, strong in courage. When I expressed a wish to see my father again, before the tomb was closed on him forever, he offered at once to lead me to his side. I did not dream that this act of Christian courage would harm him, though *he* knew it well enough. It was a fatal step, but how could I compre-

hend that the hatred sure to follow me would be felt by all who regarded my forlorn state with kindness?

I saw my father once more in the dead of night, when no one watched beside him save old Turner. Mr. Clark went with me, and the two men, my sole supporters on earth, left me alone in the funeral chamber.

I will not attempt to describe the anguish, the sting of conscience which held me chained to that death-couch. I knelt beneath the dim rays of light that gleamed like starbeams among the black draperies, and made an effort to pray. Was it my imagination, or did those fearful rubies burn in my ears? *I could not pray.*

As I rose from my knees with an oppression on my chest and brain, that held me as in fetters of iron, the masses of black velvet that fell from the tall ebony couch on which the lord of Greenhurst was laid, shook heavily, parted, and in the dusky opening I saw the head of Chaleco. The face was half in shadow, but those eyes and the gleaming teeth were full of sinister triumph.

He reached forth one hand, removed the linen from Lord Clare's face, and whispered in his native Rommany.

"Look on your mother's murderer, woman of the Caloes—look for the last time. He has covered your face with shame, driven you forth from his people. Come to us, it is time. The tribes of Granada know that the true blood has avenged itself here. They will recognize those symbols of Papita, their prophetess—they will forgive the base blood in your heart, and you shall be a queen to them. Chaleco promises."

With an effort that seemed like a wrench on every nerve in my body, I turned away my eyes from the dark head of the gipsy count, and they rested on the holy stillness of my father's death-sleep. The light gleamed over him; the sublime repose of his features had deepened till he almost smiled. Contrasted with that heavenly face, Chaleco seemed a demon tempting me.

I fell upon my knees once more. The weight left my brain

and chest. Tears are sometimes sweeter and more holy than prayer. I wept freely.

When I arose, Chaleco stood beside me, but the power of his fierce eyes was gone. The unnatural influence that he had obtained over me was lost in the more sublime impressions left by that tranquil face.

"Go," I said, gently; "I am not prepared to follow yet."

"Wait till these gentiles spurn you away then!" he answered, in a fierce whisper; "they will do it. No fear, I can wait."

"God only knows what they will do," I said; "but I was not made for an avenger. Children do not turn and rend those who gave them life. Look there, how he smiles, and yet I killed him. You call this vengeance—it is murder!"

"Fool!" he exclaimed, "fool! but wait, wait!"

He waved his hand toward me as if to forbid any movement; and going to an antique cabinet which I remembered well, began to search in its drawers. I saw him take out two or three articles which he thrust in his bosom, then with a dark look toward the bed he disappeared. I know not how, for when I would have stopped his progress the velvet drapery swayed between me and him, as if dashed down with a sweep of his arm. When I searched behind that, he was gone.

On the next day my father was buried. I did not attempt to join the procession, or force myself on the notice of those who had assembled to render the last honors to his memory. Strangers could walk close by his bier; I looked on like a wild animal through the thick trees that concealed me. It was a bitter thought, and something of old resentments kept me dumb as the funeral train swept by.

I think it was three or four days after Lord Clare's funeral, when Turner received a message from the Hurst. He seemed troubled, but made an evident effort to appear unconcerned. I saw him go with misgivings, for late events had left me in a state of nervousness that detected evils in every shadow. My presentiments were right. Lady Clare, the new countess, before

leaving for her London house, among some other old and favorite servants, coldly ordered the old man away, unless he would send me, her brother's orphan, from beneath his roof. Other changes were about to be made. The Marston Court living, which had been vacant more than a year, and which controlled that of Greenhurst, was given to Mr. Upham, who had taken orders and would assume it at once. This man now held Cora's father in his power.

Everywhere was I hedged in and surrounded by foes; an Ishmaelitish feeling took possession of me amid my grief. The only friends that clung to me on earth were driven forth like dogs, because they gave me shelter. I knew well that Turner would not hesitate; that he would beg by the way-side rather than forsake the poor foundling he had cherished so long.

But he was now an old man, united to a woman scarcely more capable of working her way through ordinary life than a child. Should I permit him to be thus unhoused and thrust into new phases of life that I might share his little means of comfort? He loved our beautiful old dwelling. To send him from among the trees of that park would end like uprooting the oldest oak there. Not for me—not for me should this be done!

But Cora and her father, they had offered me a share in that pretty home by the church. This thought, for an instant, gave me pleasure; but was not the good man also dependent on a friend of Lady Catherine's? I had almost said menial—for the soul renders baser services, sometimes, than the bare hands can give. Was not he also indirectly at the mercy of this new countess?

All night long I thought over these bitter reflections, and, spite of myself, an indignant sense of oppression—cruel, undeserved oppression, filled my soul. The iron of my nature broke up through the soil that had covered it for a time. The sibyl's ear-rings grew precious to me. If cast out from one race, they were burning links which drew me to the darker and fiercer people, to whom persecution was an inheritance.

I arose in the morning and went to Greenhurst. The countess would have had me driven from her steps had I desired admission ; but, well aware of this, I entered alone, unannounced, and made my way to her dressing-room.

The contrasts in that woman's character were most repulsive. While her aims were all deep and cruel as the grave, their exhibition was always toned down by conventionalisms. While planning the ruin of a fellow creature, she would sit quietly curling the hair of her lapdog, as if that only occupied her mind.

When I entered her presence, she rose hastily from the depths of an easy-chair, in which she had been buried, and arranged the folds of a violet silk dressing-gown, with what seemed fastidious regard to the effect her delicate attempt at mourning would have upon the young gipsy. I was surprised at this. It seemed impossible that a woman so relentless could occupy herself with trivial attempts at display like this. Now, it seems the most natural thing on earth. Inordinate vanity and a savage want of feeling have linked themselves together through all history. The bad man or woman is almost invariably a vain one.

I think the woman took a mean pleasure in making her dog bark at me, for her hand was playing about his ears, and a hateful smile warped her lips as his snarling yelp died into a howl.

I took no heed, but walked up to her chair and rested one hand upon it. She shrunk back.

"Madam," I said, "you have made it a condition with Mr. Turner that he shall thrust me from his door. Because he rejects this you wish to drive him from the estate. He refuses no longer; I have come to inform you of this. To-morrow you will have rendered your brother's child homeless."

"I am glad," said the woman, haughtily—"very glad that Turner has come to his senses. No one wishes, of course, to send him away; he is a good servant enough ; but we cannot make that pretty cottage a nest for impostors. So long as he

lives there quietly and alone with his old wife, it does not signify, though I had a fancy for tearing the place down. But he must not harbor objectionable people ; give him to understand this before you go. Above all things, strolling gipsies and their children must be kept from the estate. He will understand !”

“Madam, have I your promise that Mr. Turner shall remain in his old place so long as I keep from his house ?” I questioned.

“Why, yes,” she answered, smoothing the dog’s ear over her finger ; “he is a good old man enough. No one will disturb him, unless my son’s bride should take a distaste to his ugliness when she comes down.”

I received the sidelong glance of her eyes as she said this without flinching, and she went on.

“Estelle has fastidious fancies in such things. Now, I think of it, she may be in want of a clever maid. Did she not approve of your talent in that way, once ? If the situation would keep you from want, I have no earthly objection.”

“Madam !” said I, standing upright and speaking, as it were a prophecy, for the words were not formed by a moment’s thought—“madam, when I come back to Greenhurst, I shall be its mistress, not a servant.”

She turned white with rage, and clenched her fingers fiercely among the thick curls of her spaniel, which lay crouched in her lap, eyeing me like a rattlesnake.

As I spoke, a low laugh reached my ear from a window ; and, for an instant, I saw the face of Chaleco looking in through the curtains. Lady Clare cowered back in her seat, frightened by the glance that I fixed upon her, by my words and the fiendish glee of that laugh.

“Go,” she said, at last, “leave the estate, you and your old supporter ; root and branch you shall all be exterminated.”

A noise at the window, a flutter of silk, and Chaleco stood by me.

“No, madam,” he said, “*she* shall go because it is the will

of her people ; but as for that old man, touch but the dog he loves at your peril !”

“What are you ?” faltered the lady, gathering up her spaniel in an agony of terror. “How came you in this place ?”

“I have been here before,” said Chaleco.

“When ?”

“On the night Lord Clare’s wife died.” He stooped down whispering the words in her ear. “If a hair of that old man’s head suffers for his kindness to this child, *I will come again.*”

“I promise,” she faltered.

“Bah, I want no promise; your white face is truer than a false tongue. You dare not touch him—we of the Caloes have soft steps and potent drinks. We know how to wait, but in the end those who tread on us are stung.”

“You need not tell me that,” she answered bitterly, struggling with her terror.

“Be cautious then ; you who owe this vast property to us should be considerate !”

“To you ?—to you ?”

“Yes, to us. Had not Lady Clare drank too freely of harmless cold water—had not Lord Clare known it, and so tortured himself to death, where would your chances of property have been ?”

“And you did this ?” cried the woman, aghast.

“Who else ? The gentiles have no relish for vengeance, they swallow it at a mouthful—we take a life-time for one meal—don’t make us hungry again !”

Chaleco turned away with a scornful smile, and, stooping to my ear, whispered,

“At Marston Court to-night, I shall wait !”

He glided toward the window, lifted the curtain, and was gone before Lady Clare knew that he had moved ; for, overcome with cowardly terror, she had buried her face in the cushions of her easy-chair.

I did not wait for her to look up, but left the room, satisfied that my poor old benefactor was saved from all attempts at persecution.

I went to the parsonage after this, where I might be another day—what course of life would be mine was uncertain, all that I knew was that my life at Greenhurst had ended.

Thus tortured in its affections, my poor heart turned with longing tenderness toward Cora, the only child companion I had ever known. I would see her, and with my secret kept close, have the joy of one mere loving interview. My heart grew gentle with tenderness as I approached the house. She was not at the window. An air of strange gloom pervaded the place. I entered the parlor; it had not been swept that day; books, drawings, and Cora's guitar lay huddled together on the table; all the blinds were closed but one, and that was kept in constant motion by the wind, now letting in gushes of light, again filling the room with shadows.

In a dim corner stood Mr. Clark's easy-chair with the back toward me. I approached it and leaned over. There sat the curate exactly as he had the morning of his wife's death, pale, tearless, the most touching picture of grief that I ever saw.

I looked around for the cause. Where was Cora, and her father in this state? I ran to her room; it was empty. Into the kitchen; the servant sat moping by a dresser. She did not know what had come over her master, or where Miss Cora was. He had not spoken a word or eaten a mouthful since she went out.

Sick at heart, I went back to the parlor, and, kneeling by the good man, took his hand in mine.

"Speak to me!" I said; "oh, speak—what has happened? Why are you thus?"

He looked on me as he had done that first day in his grief, laid his hand on my head, and burst into tears. He did not speak, but put one hand into his bosom, took out a letter and attempted to unfold it. But his poor hands shook so nervously that the paper only rattled in his grasp.

With painful forebodings I took it from his hand. I did not read it all, for a sickness of heart came over and blinded me ; but enough was plain ; Cora Clark, my little Cora had left her father's house to be married—so she wrote—and her companion—who was he ?

George Irving left Clare Hall on the very night that letter was written. She mentioned no names, but this was a part that all might read.

Mr. Clark looked wearily at me as I read the letter. His lips moved, and he said in a meek, broken-hearted voice,

“What can we do, Zana ?”

“We will find her—love her—take her home again,” I said. “Cora shall not remain with this villain, even as his wife !”

“I fear,” said Mr. Clark, looking meekly in my face, “God has taken away my strength—I cannot follow them.”

He arose to his feet, but staggered feebly and fell back again, helpless as a child.

“I will find her. Get well and wait patiently, father, I will not rest till Cora is at home again.”

“God bless you my child !”

He kissed me on the forehead, and with this holy seal upon my brow, I went forth from among my father's people an out-cast, an Ishmael among women, but strong to act and to endure.

CHAPTER XLVII.

MY LOST FRIEND AND MY LOST HOME.

I HAD made all my preparations, packed up a few clothes, such as I could carry upon the horn of my saddle, and carefully sealed up the bronze coffer, which was half full of gold. Turner had been absent most of the day, and Maria, luckily, was at the village, for some household purpose. All this was fortunate. Knowing that a few hours would separate us, perhaps forever, I could not have sustained my part in their presence.

When they came home my eyes were red with weeping, and I sat down helplessly between them, so sick at heart that it seemed to me like death. They had heard of Cora's elopement, and did not wonder at my grief.

We parted for the night about ten. Oh, how I yearned to throw myself once more into those kind arms and ask a last blessing! But it could not be. A suspicion that I was about to leave them would have defeated my plans. I knew well that they would go forth into the highway homeless beggars rather than see me so depart.

With calm sadness, though my heart swelled painfully in my bosom, I went to my room. Oh, that dull, mournful hour of solitude while I waited for those two friends, all I had on earth, to sleep, that I might escape like a thief from beneath their roof. I shall never forget that hour. A life-time of dreary pain was crowded into it. Remember I was very young, and could only recall as a dream the time when that park had not been my home.

True, I had a purpose that gave me strength. Cora must be brought back to her father; then what was to be my fate? The gipsy caves of Granada—those caves at whose bare remem-

brance my poor mother had shuddered even in the zenith of her happiness? But where else should I go? Ishmael was not more thoroughly cast out by his father's people than I had been—while more fortunate than me, his mother went with him into the desert. I was alone. In the broad world there was no human being from whom I could claim the draught of cold water which poor Hagar gave to him.

I went forth, braving all the woes that were divided by the outcast mother and her child. The rival that I had loved better than a sister had taken the soul that was mine, and cruelly left me to perish or to suffer; it mattered as little which to her as it did to Sarah, that her handmaid died in the wilderness, or passed heart-broken into the desert. Driven forth from my last shelter by my father's sister, hunted down like an evil thing, I felt like the poor stag which I had once saved from the very foes that seemed chasing me to death. As I sat there alone in my pretty chamber, with the coffer in my lap, and the bundle at my feet, I thought of the stone cairn beneath which my mother lay, deep in the snow mountains, and wished that I too were under it.

Everything was still. Nothing but the faint flutter of autumn leaves as they fell to the earth reached my ear. Yes, one thing more, the beatings of my poor heart sounded loud and quick in the stillness, like the laugh of winter winds when they rustle through masses of dead foliage,

I got up at last—oh, with what heaviness of heart and limb. With the coffer in one hand, and the bundle in the other, I passed like a ghost from my beautiful chamber, leaving it bathed in the autumn moonbeams, all the more quiet that a weary heart had gone out of it.

I went through the little picture gallery. The moonlight threw my black shadow on the lovely pictures and statuettes, veiling them, as it were, in mourning at my approach. As I looked back through my tears, they were poised gracefully as ever, and smiling in the pale light, heartless as my human friends. It was only in my path that the darkness fell.

One moment I paused at the door of Turner's room. I held my breath, listening at the key-hole for the faintest noise. A sigh from those loved sleepers would have fallen upon my heart like a blessing. Nothing reached me—nothing but the sound of the wind, which was beginning to sob among the leaves out of doors.

As I listened, something rubbed against my ankle, and the soft purr of a house cat, whose instinct had recognized me in the dark, made me utter a faint exclamation. I stooped down and caressed the kind animal a moment, then hurried away, fearful that my sobs would arouse Turner. The cat followed me to the stable, and looked on while I saddled Jupiter with a sort of grave wonder, which seemed to me like regret. She watched me as I fastened my bundle and mounted the poor old pony. When I rode away, looking wistfully back at the house, she kept her place till I could no longer distinguish her.

I believe it was a beautiful night ; certainly the moon was at its full, and the sky crowded with stars, luminous with that deep glow which precedes an early frost. Without being boisterous, the wind filled the leaves with their mournful whispers, and the fragrance of broken leaves and forest flowers, that always breathe sweetest as the frost kills them, floated silently on the air, saddening the atmosphere with the perfume of their decay.

I received all these impressions passively, for my heart was too heavy for anything but that dull consciousness which is blunted by pain. All the way I was comparing myself with the boy Ishmael, and thinking of Hagar with yearning sympathy, such as a woman only who has been wronged and cast forth into that great desert the world can feel.

I reached Marston Court, but the imposing beauty of those walls, the picturesque effect which the broad moonlight produced among its carved balconies, broad eaves, and great entrance doors, made only a dream-like impression on me. My heart was full of one thought. Here and now I must part with old Jupiter for ever, my last friend. I reached the steps, let myself down from the saddle, and unknotted my bundle with cold,

trembling fingers, that blundered painfully in their task. Then—it was because I wanted to prolong the moment of parting—I knotted up the bridle short upon his neck, that he might not tread on it. When this was done, I stood a long time with my arm over his neck, crying like a child. Poor old fellow ! when I stood up and shook his bridle, telling him as well as I could for my sobs, to go home again, he turned his head and fell to whimpering, as if he understood my desolation better than any human creature had done.

“Go,” I said, for all the strength was leaving me. “Go home, Jupiter—home !”

He went tramping heavily over the tangled ground homeward as I had commanded. I stood till he disappeared among the thickets, listening breathlessly for his last footfall. When that came, I felt, for the first time, how utterly, utterly I was alone in the world. I sat upon the steps of that old house a long time, without thinking or caring what was next to be done. Perhaps I fell asleep; but at last a hand was laid on my shoulder, and Chaleco stood beside me.

“Come,” he said, “this is no place for you ; the night is cold.”

“Is it ?” I said, rising languidly, “I did not know it !”

“Not know it ? Why you are trembling like a willow branch now.”

I was indeed shivering from head to foot. My garments rustled as I stood up, for the dew upon them had turned into frost.

Chaleco had kindled a fire in the huge chimney of his tower room, and the flames sent a thousand shadows dancing among the grotesque marble carvings that overhung them. He had evidently made some preparations for my coming. A huge easy-chair, cushioned with tarnished velvet, stood on the hearth; and on a little work-table, with curiously twisted legs, was a plate of biscuit, and one of those old-fashioned goblets of Venetian glass which have since become so rare.

I was about to sit down, somewhat cheered by the warmth ;

but Chaleco prevented this, while he shook the frost from my garments and carefully removed my bonnet.

"There, now, you may warm yourself without being wet through," he said, kindly; and taking a silver cup from the hearth, he filled the goblet with Bordeaux wine, spiced and warm.

"There," he said, "eat and drink ; then we will have some talk together."

I obeyed him, cheered and comforted, spite of my grief.

"There, now that you have got a dash of color, and have ceased trembling, tell me how you got away. Did any one attempt to stop you?" said Chaleco, at length.

"No one knew—I ran away!"

He laughed.

"That was right—the old blood there. But Papita's money—you did not leave that behind?"

"No, I have it here. Do you want it?"

"I? by the Sphinxes! no, it would burn my soul. The gold is yours—everything in the coffer is yours. Papita's curse would consume any other who touched it."

"But what can I do with it?"

Chaleco laughed till his white teeth shone again.

"What can you do with it?" he said. "Anything, anything. It will take you to Granada—make a queen of you."

I shook my head.

"So you reject it ; you still despise the Caloes who would adore you—still cling to the Gentiles who have spurned you forth like a dog."

"Not so—I scorn no one—I cling to no one—God help me ! I have nothing on earth to which I can cling !"

"Your mother's people—are they nothing?"

"They murdered her !" I said with a shudder.

Chaleco turned white ; his eyes fell, and he muttered,

"I—I did not do it !"

"No, but they did," I answered.

"It was the law—an old law, made among the people of

Egypt centuries ago ; no man among us dares withstand the law."

"But you would have me acknowledge these laws—enforce them?"

"Our people are ready ; go to them with those blood-red rubies in your ears ; give them of Papita's gold, and they will make you greater than Chaleco—greater than Papita ever was."

Again I recoiled from the thought.

"Where else will you go?" asked the gipsy ; "who else will receive you? What other friend have you on earth but me—me, the man whom your mother betrayed? Yet who has spent his life in guarding her child. If not with your own people, where will you go, Zana?"

Where could I go? Deserted by the whole world, who would receive me save the gipsy hordes of my mother's race, or those to whom friendship for me would bring ruin on themselves?

I did not attempt to answer. On the broad earth that strange gipsy man was the only human being that would not turn away in scorn, or become imperilled by defending me.

"You will go to Granada, Zana?" he continued, bending over me with paternal interest. "Had Lord Clare but lived to sign that will, then, indeed, you might have remained here to triumph over your mother's foes. Many of her tribe could have crossed the sea to render homage to Papita's great-grandchild—the inheritance of her gold, and the symbols of her power. In these old walls, Zana, should your court have been; these great oaks clothing the uplands should have sheltered a thousand tents. Oh, Zana, we would have built up a little kingdom here in the midst of our enemies. Why did you not have that will signed, Zana? It was for this we brought you back to England—for this you have been left among her destroyers so long."

"Hush!" I said, shuddering—"hush! I dare not think of it. Great heavens, were all his estates mine at this moment, I

would give them to forget that death-scene. Thank God, he did not sign that will !”

“Bah ! it was a bad move—but let that drop. Granada is still open, and Papita’s gold will do wonders among our people there !”

“But they are ignorant, rude, untaught. My poor mother pined among them, even before Lord Clare came to turn her discontent into aversion.”

“But they are capable of learning—they will follow Papita’s child in all things. She has but to will it, and the young ones of her tribe can be wise and deeply read as their queen.”

This idea filled me with a new life. Yes, I might be the means of improving this wild race. Perhaps God had permitted me to be spurned and cast forth like a rabid dog from among the gentiles, that I might become a benefactor to the Caloes. Surely they could not deal more treacherously by me than my father’s people had done. These thoughts were succeeded by a remembrance of Cora, and they gave way before the great duty that I had imposed on myself.

“Chaleco,” I said, with energy and decision, “there is yet something for me to do here. I had a friend”——

He interrupted me.

“I know the parson’s daughter, a little golden-haired, blue-eyed thing, that will always be a child. You would find her—for what ?”

“That she may return to her father—that she may be saved,” I answered.

“Nay, nay, let her go. What has Papita’s child in common with this traitress ? What is there worth loving in one who could become the victim of a wily boy like that ?”

I felt the blood rush to my forehead at this scornful mention of the man I had loved with all the fervor of my mother’s race, and all the pride of his. But was he not a traitor ? How could I resent it, though the swart gypsy did revile him ? But the anger I dared not form in words broke out in decision of purpose.

"Stay with me—help me till I find Cora—till I send an assurance of her marriage back to that broken-hearted man, and I will then go with you to Granada."

"Heart and soul?" questioned the gipsy.

"Heart and soul!" I replied.

"You will abandon these people?"

"If you insist, I will."

"Then let us linger."

"But where—how?" I questioned. "What course can we take?"

"That which they took—the way to Scotland."

"Let us start at once," I cried, fired with a thousand conflicting feelings, in which there was jealousy, doubt, and a generous desire to rescue my friend; but my limbs gave way beneath all this eagerness, and I fell back gasping for breath.

"Not now—you must have rest, poor child," said the gipsy, smoothing my hair with his palms.

I drew back, recoiling from a repetition of the mysterious influence which had possessed me the last time I was in that room.

"Do you fear me—me, Chaleco?" he said, with saddened eyes.

"No; but let me act independently—let my brain be clear, my limbs free—let my own will control me—none other shall!"

He smiled quietly, and kept his softened eyes fixed on mine. I began to struggle against the drowsiness that possessed me; my eyelashes fell together, and I could muster neither strength nor wish to open them. A languid repose stole over my limbs,—I did not awake till morning, and then Chaleco stood before me, holding an antique china cup and saucer in his hand full of smoking chocolate.

"Drink!" he said, raking open the embers; "here are roasted eggs and bread—they will give you strength."

I took the cup. "When shall we start?" I asked, eager to commence my search for Cora.

"Not till after nightfall," was the reply; "one day of entire

rest you must have. Besides, it will not do for us to travel so near Greenhurst by day-light."

My heart fell at the thought that no one would trouble themselves about us—no one except old Turner, and secrecy was the only kindness I could render him.

After I had breakfasted, Chaleco left me, and all day long I wandered through the vast desolation of that old building, as a ghost might haunt the vaulted passages of a catacomb.

The reaction of all the exciting scenes I had passed through was upon me, and with dull apathy I strolled through those desolated chambers, regardless of all that would, in another state of mind, have filled my brain with the keenest emotions. Everything was so still in the old house—the sunbeams that came through the windows were so dulled with accumulated dust upon the glass, that I seemed gliding through a cloudy twilight quietly as a shadow, and almost as lifeless. I literally cared for nothing; my heart beat so sluggishly that I could hardly feel the life within me. Now I remembered every object in the old house with perfect distinctness. Then everything ran together like an incoherent dream.

Night came, and then I began to wonder about Chaleco, who had been absent all day. I had no apprehension, and but little anxiety; nothing just then seemed important enough for me to care about. I thought even of my father's death-bed with a sort of stolid gloom.

Lifted high up among the old trees, and opening both to the east and west, the turret in which I sat took the last sunbeams in a perfect deluge, as they broke against the tall windows and shed their golden warmth all around me. I knew that these bright flashes came from behind Greenhurst, and that I might never see it more. This saddened me a little, and a throb of pain was gathering in my bosom when Chaleco came in. I did not know him at first, so completely was he changed. The broad sombrero, the tarnished gold and embroidery of his gipsy habiliments were all gone. A suit of quiet brown, with knee-buckles of gold and leggins of drab cloth, such as the better

classes of England wore on their journeys at that time, had quite transfigured him. His coal-black beard was neatly trimmed, and though his flashing eyes and peculiar features bespoke foreign blood, no one would have suspected him of being the picturesque vagrant he had appeared in the morning.

"Well," he said, cheerfully, "are you rested and quite ready to start? I have been making inquiries."

"Do you still intend going to Scotland?" I asked. "What have you found out?"

"That they went north—so must we. Here, I have brought some food—the dusk is gathering—eat and let us be off. Old Turner tracked your pony across the park in this direction; he may be for searching the old house, and then all chance of coming again will be over. I would not have this eagle's nest discovered for the world."

"But Lady Catherine will discover it," I said. "She will not leave the noble building to fall away thus."

"I have taken care of that. The door leading to the rooms below was walled up when I first came to England. You have not noticed, but the staircase winds down within the walls, and has a passage outward through the wine vaults. We entered through a great oak panel which opens from the picture gallery; close that and no passage can be found to the turret. I have formed a snug bower here, off and on, ever since you were left in the tent, Zana."

"And were you here then?" I asked, remembering the suffering of that period.

"No, I fled. Old Papita's death and her work at the Hurst drove me off. I went into Spain for a little time—and then farther still."

"And since then have you been always here?"

He laughed in derision at my ignorance.

"What, a Caloe count of our tribe, and always in one place? What a child it is! No, no, I only found a roost up in this tower now and then, long enough to see how it fared with you and the enemy. I have been a great traveller, Zana, sometimes

on your father's track for months and months—sometimes hovering over your pretty nest—sometimes with our people in Granada."

"Why did you follow Lord Clare?" I inquired, filled with wonder and respect for energies so indomitable.

"That my rights of vengeance should not be lost. I had received nothing but pangs and shame. The tribe had *her*. Papita swooped up Lady Clare—but the greater criminal, the most hated thing of all, was left to me. No dog ever scented his prey as I tracked Clarence, Earl of Clare."

"What for?" I cried, thrilled with a horrible suspicion. "Why did you so hound out my father?"

"Why?" he repeated with shut teeth and gleaming eyes. "What do we follow the trail of a snake when it has bitten us for, but to kill it?"

My heart was seized as with the talons of a vulture, as he said this. I remembered the subtle poisons so often mentioned in my mother's journal, and rapidly connected them with my father's terrible appearance when he returned home to die. Some of these poisons I knew to be of slow action, eating up vitality from the human system like the sluggish influence of miasma. Had my noble father been thus poisoned, and by the man who stood before me?

I could not speak—the horrible thought paralyzed me; my throat was parched; the breath panted and swelled in my lungs, but I could not draw a deep respiration. Was it indeed so?—had I sought shelter with my father's murderer? He read my thoughts and smiled fiercely.

"You are wrong," he said; "I did not do that, it needed not the drao, his own thoughts were enough to poison a dozen lives stronger than his. I watched him night and day—night and day, Zana; at a distance sometimes, but oftener close as a brother might, in those safe disguises that our people study so well. Month after month I was alone with him in the desert—on the hot sands of Africa—on the sluggish waters of the Nile. I was his dragoman, his confidential companion; for

in the desert, Zana, even that haughty being, an English nobleman, learns something of that equality which he is sure to find in the grave. Ten thousand times I could have killed him like a dog, left him in the hot sands for the jackals, and no one have been the wiser ; but that would have been like a gentile, who, in the greed of his revenge, ends all with a blow. It was sweeter to see the flesh waste from his bones ; the light from his eyes ; and to watch the death-fires kindle in his cheeks, set to blazing and fed by the venom of his own thoughts. I tell you, girl, not for the universe would I have shortened his misery for a moment. To watch it was all the joy I have tasted since your mother's last death-wail."

While he spoke, I struggled with the breath driven back upon my chest as one wrestles with a nightmare. It seemed as if I was given up to the power of a demon. At last my voice broke out so sharp and unnatural that it seemed like another person's.

"Stop, stop, I will not endure this ; he was my father—he was not deserving of this cruel malice, this murderous revenge. He was my father, man, remember that, and spare me."

"It is because he was your father that I hated him—that I gloated over the pangs that ate away his life with a keener anguish than I could have dealt him," answered the gipsy, hissing the words forth as a serpent shoots venom through its jaws.

"My God ! my God ! is the murderous blood of this man's race in my veins ?" was the wild response that broke from me as I writhed in the torture of his words—"must I become a fiend like this ?"

Instantly Chaleco seemed transformed ; the evil light went out from his face, leaving that look of subtle cunning almost universal among Caloes. With sinister gentleness he strove to soothe me into forgetfulness of all the tiger so late rampant in his nature.

"Come, little one, look up and weep, if you can ; this hot and fiery look never was your mother's."

"She had only her own wrongs to suffer and forgive ; while I—oh, Father of mercies, how great is the load of evil that I inherit and must endure ! Am I doomed like Ishmael ? Must my hand be raised against all races and all people ? Is there no brotherhood—no sisterhood—no humanity left for me on earth ?"

"Hush !" said Chaleco, softly, and gliding to the back of my chair—"hush, little one, this is madness !"

As he spoke, I felt the soft touch of his hands upon my head. What unearthly power was it that possessed this man ? Scarcely had his palm smoothed down my hair twice, when the oppression upon my chest was gone. A feeling of ineffable calm stole over me ; the hate which a moment before had burned in my heart against him, sunk quietly down, as a tiger falls asleep. I remembered all that had been said of my father, it is true, but vaguely as one thinks of a dream ; the sting and anguish, the sense of reality was gone. I slept a little, probably ten minutes, for it was not wholly dark when I awoke, but it seemed as if that sweet slumber had refreshed me for hours.

"Come now," said the gipsy, bringing my bonnet, and a habit of dark green cloth that I usually wore in cold weather when on horseback, "get ready and let us ride. We must make a good night's work of it !"

"My poor Cora," I muttered, gathering up the riding-habit, "when you are found, what will there be for me to accomplish ? What is before me after that ?"

"Hush, Zana—have you no belief in the God you talk about ? We of the Caloes, who expect nothing beyond this earth, fear nothing while here ; but you, this hereafter makes cowards of you all ; you are forever and ever flinging the present—all a man ever is sure of—after the past, or filling it with fears that blacken the future. Bah ! what is your faith to be counted for, if it gives no better courage than this ?"

I felt the rebuke, and without another complaint equipped myself to depart.

I saw no more of the old house that night, for we passed the

secret panel in the winding staircase which led to the main building, and penetrating downward through cellars and vaulted passages, came to the open air through the floor of a dilapidated summer-house.

"Look," said Chaleco, holding his lantern down that I might examine the tessellated pattern worked in with colored marbles. "Should the old house be inhabited at any time, and you wish to seek the tower yonder, press your hand upon this little flag of verd-antique, the only block of that noble stone that you will find here. See how easily it works!"

He touched the diagonal fragment, and instantly the centre of the floor sunk an inch or two and wheeled inward, leaving a circular entrance and a glimpse of the winding stairs we had just mounted, where a large mosaic star had a moment before formed a centre to the radiating pattern of the pavement.

"You understand," he said, wheeling the star back to its place, "this passage may yet be of use, who knows? At any rate, it is our secret. I found the passage and blocked up the turret door. No one remembers much about the old house now, and the change will never be noticed. No human soul that ever breathed here, save you and I, are alive; and my lady countess must take the old pile as she finds it. Twenty years of ruin will make changes; the birds and I have held possession a long time," he added, lifting his eyes to the rooks' nests that blackened the topmost boughs of a group of elms just above us.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

OUR FLIGHT FROM MARSTON COURT.

IN the shadow of these elm trees two horses were standing, one equipped for a lady. They tossed their heads as we came up and backed restively from the light.

"They are fresh as larks, you see," said Chaleco, patting the near horse with his hand. "So, so, Jerald, is this the way you stand fire?" and he swung the lantern full in the creature's face, which made him rear and plunge backward. "Come, Zana."

I stepped forward, and with a laugh Chaleco lifted me to the saddle.

"There is the true blood again," he muttered, smoothing down my skirt, while I gathered up the bridle.

A pair of leathern saddle-bags, such as were often used by travellers in those times, were swung across Chaleco's saddle. They contained, he told me, the clothes I had brought in one end, and the bronze coffer in the other.

While he arranged these saddle-bags, I sat upon my horse looking gloomily around. It was a dull, cloudy night. The dense masses of foliage seemed like embankments of ebony. All around was still and dark as chaos, save the elm-tree boughs overhead, that began to bend and quake beneath the disturbed rooks that swept back and forth among them, sending out their unearthly caws. They seemed like dark spirits calling out from the blackness, "go, go, go!"

Chaleco took the candle from his lantern, extinguished it beneath his foot, and flinging the lantern away, mounted. Thus, amid darkness and silence, broken only by the hoarse rooks that seemed hooting us away, I the only child of Clarence,

Earl of Clare, left his domain and went forth into the wide, wide world.

We rode fast and steadily on during the whole night, only pausing once at a field of oats, from which Chaleco gathered food for our horses. The day revealed a level and very beautiful country, embowered with hop-fields, and rich with the most exuberant cultivation. With the bright October air, the sunlight, and all the strange features of scenery that presented themselves before me, my spirits began to revive. The warmth and ardor of youthful curiosity, heightened, doubtless, by the gipsy fire in my veins, a fire which finds its natural fuel in adventures, rendered me almost happy. The strange world on which I gazed, looking so broad, so brave in its morning beauty, the air at once balmy and bracing, awoke all the exhilaration of my nature; and nothing but pity for my tired horse kept me from breaking into a canter along the highway.

We stopped at no public house, but ate the cold capon and bread which Chaleco took from his saddle-bag, at the foot of an old oak growing out alone on a broad heath or common which we were crossing at the time. Close by our seat, upon the little mound of turf lifted up from the level by the gnarled roots of the oak, a spring of the purest water gushed over a shelf of rock nearly overlapped by rich moss, and with the appetites a long ride had given, our breakfast was full of fresh enjoyment.

Chaleco's wandering habits had fitted him well for this outdoor life. When I asked for drink, he ran down to a thicket below the spring, gathered some huge leaves, and, while walking leisurely back, converted them into a drinking-cup with two or three dexterous turns of the hand. I must have smiled as the leafy cup was presented, swelling out with the most delicious water that sparkled in drops all over the outside.

"Oh, you smile," said Chaleco; "this is our free-life, Zana. In Spain, my girl, your drinking-cups shall be made of orange leaves, your sherbet cooled with the snows of Sierra Nevada."

I uttered a faint cry—the leafy cup fell from my hands—the snow-mountains seemed looming all around me. My mother—my poor mother—how could that man bring you thus to my mind? Was it hatred of the gentile blood in my veins? Did he wish to kill me also?

We mounted again, and rode on in silence. By his inadvertent mention of the snow-mountains, Chaleco had filled his own soul with gloom. I began to pity him, for his face grew haggard with much thought.

We rested at noon and slept some hours; then on again all night, and till dark the second day.

Not doubting Chaleco's ability or sources of intelligence, I followed him with hope and animation. Perhaps this search after my friend served to keep my mind from dwelling upon the future—a future which my soul ever refused to contemplate steadily; the refinements of life, all the sweet blessings of civilization are not to be flung aside so readily. Notwithstanding all the wrongs heaped upon me in that land, I could not think of the barrancos of Granada without repugnance. There was something of disgust in this remembrance. A purely savage people might have aroused my enthusiasm, but this blending of savage and civilized life found among the Spanish gipsies destroyed the dignity of both; they had neither the vigor of savages, nor the refinements of civilization—no religion, no hereafter. If I went among them, it must be to adopt their habits, and abide by their laws. But I dared not reflect on this, and our rapid journeying served to keep such thoughts in the background.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE MOUNTAIN LAKE AND HILL-SIDE COTTAGE.

WE entered Scotland, travelling rapidly till we reached the mountains. I do not speak of the scenes through which we passed, because this memoir is already too long, and my hands are getting weary of the task. At a little town in the highlands we found two gipsies that I had seen twice on the way, evidently waiting for us. After an earnest conversation with these men, Chaleco came to me, apparently somewhat elated.

"Well, child, we have found them out at last! Our people are used to this kind of work, and a few gold-pieces from Papita's box kept them on the track."

"And have you found them?" I inquired, rejoiced, and yet with a strange aching pain at the heart, for Cora once found my promise of joining the Spanish tribes must be redeemed.

"Behold," he said, drawing me to a window of the public house, which overlooked one of those pretty sheets of water that lie like mirrors in the rugged frame-work of the Scottish mountains. "Look yonder on the opposite hill."

I saw a small dwelling perched above the lake, and sheltered by a vast cedar tree.

"Well," I said, "I see nothing but a farm-house, and some sheep in a hollow of the mountains."

"You will find the Gitanilla up yonder, I think," he answered.

"What, Cora—my Cora? Come—come, it is but a walk, and we are with her."

"Better than that," he answered. "The distance is more

than it looks; we will be rowed across the lake by our people. Get your plaid and let us be off."

I went for the Tartan shawl which Chaleco had bought as we approached the chilly north, and we descended to the lake.

It was early in the morning, and long shadows from the mountain fell sheer across the little loch, letting in gleams of light only in one or two places where the hills were cleft into fissures and valleys, their sides rich with heath, through which the sunshine poured upon the waters in purple and golden splendor.

Through these cool shadows and glowing ripples of light our boat passed to the opposite shore. A footpath led from the public beach along the side of a valley winding upward with gradual ascent, to the house we had seen. It was a stone building, evidently the abode of a sheep farmer, whose flocks were scattered over the hill-side, cropping the short grass from among the heath.

It was strange, but this scene seemed familiar to me; the old stone house, the lake, the opposite mountains, bold and rugged, the very sheep whitening the hollows, like masses of snow, reminded me of some foregone impression vivid as the reality. I bethought myself, with a start, and stood breathless, gazing upon the house. It was that house, those mountains, and the quiet lake below that I had seen in my sleep that night at Marston Court, where, amid storm and lightning, the history of my parents was pictured in fragments like that before me.

I looked at Chaleco, but he was gazing indifferently around; evidently the scene had no such associations for him. The power which he possessed had been sufficient to awaken memory, not create belief in a thing that had never existed.

A mountain vine, whose leaves were red with their autumnal death sap, clambered up the front of the old house, hanging around the windows and eaves, like fragments of hostile banners, in wild keeping with the rugged scenery. Two or three narrow windows were almost choked up by its red foliage; but from one, overlooking the lake, it had been forced back in gor-

geous festoons, revealing a lattice full of diamond-shaped glass, upon which the sunbeams were shining.

As I stood looking at this window, it was gently opened. A face peered out, and the lattice closed again, before the cry of surprise and joy had left my lips.

"What is it?" said Chaleco, turning sharply at my exclamation.

"It is *she*! It is Cora!"

"Oh, is that all? I expected to find her here."

"But she saw me, and shrunk away."

"Very likely; but you shall see her, little one, nevertheless."

"Oh, why should she avoid me?" I said, twinkling my tears away with the lashes that could not keep them back.

"Come—come—don't be a baby, Zana; weep when you can do nothing better," said the gipsy, out of patience with my childishness, "wait a moment, and I will send the girl out to meet you."

"No, no, only ask if I may come in—that is all," I cried, breathless with fear that he might be rough with the poor girl, "tell her that we come from Mr. Clark; tell her anything that is kind."

He did not hear half I said, but entered the house. Directly he returned, and beckoned with his hand. I advanced into a large kitchen, furnished comfortably, but rudely, after the Scottish fashion, in houses of the kind.

"Go in yonder," said Chaleco, pointing to an inner door, through which I heard the faint rustle of a dress.

I entered a small room, fitted up with some attempt at elegance. A faded carpet was on the floor, and some old-fashioned oak furniture stood around. Two or three good cabinet pictures were on the walls, and some dainty ornaments of antique and foreign manufacture stood upon a table near the lattice. By this table stood Cora, stooping wearily forward, and supporting herself by the window-frame, with her great, wild eyes, black with excitement, bent upon the entrance. The long golden waves which ended in ringlets on her shoulders,

seemed to light up the pallor of her cheeks, and I saw that she shrunk and trembled at my approach.

"Cora !" I said, with a gush of loving joy, "dear, dear Cora !"

She shrunk back, folding her arms, and eyeing me with a look of affright.

"Cora, I came from your father ; speak to me, I am so glad to see *you*."

"But why have you come here ? I did not ask it—I did not want it," she answered, her eyes filling, and her sweet lips quivering.

"I came to ask—to entreat—oh, Cora, come back, come back to your poor father, or he will die."

"I know it—I know that he will die without me ; but how can I go ? what can I do ?"

"Go home," I answered imperatively ; "why, oh, Cora Clark, why did you leave us ?"

"Don't ask me—don't speak to me on this subject ; I will not be questioned," with a gleam of temper in her blue eyes, and a willful pout of the lips, the remnants of her wayward infancy, "you have no right to come here, Zana—none in the world. Oh, Zana, *he* will be so angry."

Something of the old love was in her voice. Encouraged by it, I went and softly encircled her shrinking form in my arms, leaning my wet cheeks against the golden thickness of her hair.

"Cora, dear, is it your husband that you speak of ?" I said, with a heart that trembled more than my voice.

She threw herself on my bosom, clasping me close in her shaking arms.

"Oh, Zana ! Zana !"

I understood it all, and the heart, but an instant before trembling with hope, lay heavy and still in my bosom.

"Cora," I said, in a whisper, parting the hair from her forehead, and kissing it with affection deeper than I had ever known before, and yet with a shudder, for I knew that *his* lips

had touched that white brow last, and spite of the knowledge, felt in my soul that he was dear to me even then, traitor and villain as he was, "Cora, love, come home, the little house is desolate without you ; your father"—

"Don't, oh, don't ; why will you speak that name so cruelly? I cannot bear it," she cried, struggling in my arms ; "but—but tell me how he is," she added, clinging closer and closer, that I might not look in her face.

"Ill, Cora, ill, and pining to death for the sight of his child."

Her head fell heavily on my shoulder, and she gasped out, "No, no, he is *not* ill."

I would not spare her one pang, she must feel all the desolation that had fallen on her good parent, or my errand would fail.

"Yes, ill, Cora, helpless—stricken down like a child. I left him in the old chair—that by which you and I stood to comfort him on the day of your mother's funeral ; that was a mournful time, Cora, but the day when you left him, think what it must have been—think of that noble man, calling in anguish for his living child, and she silent as the dead—gone not into the sweet peace of the grave, but?"—

"Hold ! oh, Zana, Zana ! you are killing me—killing me, I say !"

She broke from my arms, and pushed back the hair from her face with both hands as she spoke ; then, as her eyes met mine, full of sorrowful reproach and moist with compassion, she let the hair sweep down, and clasping those two dimpled hands over her eyes, wept till her sobs filled the room.

"Will you leave this bad man and go back to your father, Cora ?" I said, circling her waist with my arms again.

"He is not bad—I cannot—I *cannot* leave him. . It is of no use asking me. It would kill him ; oh, Zana, Zana ! don't call him bad—he is so kind, he loves me so much !"

"And yet brings you here—steals you away from your innocent home, to—to"—

I could not go on, grief and indignation stifled me.

"He does not deserve this—I will not hear it!" she cried, breaking from me. Her sweet face flushed red and warm through the tears that streamed over it, and her eyes flashed a defiant glance into mine. "Say what you will of me, I am wicked, cruel, worse—worse, if it pleases you to say it; but as for him, did I not tell you, Zana, that I loved him? I do—I do better than life, better than my own soul, better than ten thousand friends like you, than ten thousand fath—oh, my God, I did not say that—no, no, I dare *not* say that."

I sat down by the table, shocked and almost in despair. She crept toward me, and sinking down to the floor, laid her head upon my lap, exhausted by this outbreak of passion.

"Hush, Cora, hush, and let us talk quietly a little," I said, after a pause, during which we both cried bitterly together, as we had often done over our petty sorrows in childhood. "Tell me, darling—don't, don't cry so—tell me why it is that this man does not make you his wife?"

"Don't ask me about that—don't, don't—he is afraid of Lady Clare, he expects everything from her."

"I know it—I know it well; but"—

She interrupted the bitter speech on my lips.

"Oh, she is a terrible woman, Zana, and he fears her so much; she has got everything that ought to be his, and would quite crush him if she suspected anything before all is settled between them."

How beautiful she looked with her pleading eyes, soft with love and dim with tears—so unconscious, too, of her terrible position, so confiding—my heart ached for her.

"You will go back and tell this to father," she said, kissing my hands and folding them to her bosom; "tell him only to have patience for a little time; cheer him up, Zana, he loves you so much, almost as much, you know, as he did poor me. Tell him I am quite comfortable here among the hills; that I read some, and think of him more than is good for me. Will you say all this, Zana?"

"Don't ask me now, darling—take time, I shall stay here by the lake a week yet ; we will consult and think what is best to be done. Stop crying, dear, it will do no good"——

She interrupted me, with a faint smile.

"I know it—if tears would help one, I should be very happy, for I do think no human being ever shed so many. It is lonely some here sometimes, Zana."

"But you are not alone," I said, with a gleam of hope; "he cannot find much amusement here to take him away from you."

"Oh, *he* is scarcely ever here. They keep him so constantly occupied."

"Who?" I inquired, surprised.

"Oh, the countess and the young lady they call Estelle. Do you think her handsome, that Estelle? some people do, but"——

I interrupted her, sharply.

"Lady Clare—is she in the highlands, then?"

"Yes, they came up to a hunting-lodge, some miles back in the mountains, that Lord Clare used to live in years ago ; his death made them all too gloomy for society, and they came quietly up here."

"And does Lady Clare know—that is, does she consent that you reside so near?"

"I never asked ; he thought it best, and I could not endure to stay in London alone ; but after a little, no one will care if she does know. When all is settled, you see, papa can come and live with us at Marston Court."

I shuddered ; how cruelly each word went to my heart—they would live at Marston Court then. A jealous pang shot through me at the bare idea ; and yet if her dream should prove unreal, how terrible must her fate be. The interview was becoming painful beyond endurance. I arose, she clung to me caressingly.

"You will come again, Zana ; I have some things on my mind that trouble me besides my poor father."

"But shall I find you alone?"

"I am almost always alone," she replied, sadly.

"To-morrow," I said, "be ready and we will go out on the lake together, and talk over everything. Would you like that, Cora?"

She smiled, and her soft eyes sparkled through their mistiness; poor, young thing, she was half unconscious yet of the misery that lay before her. She kissed me over and over again as I left, and when our boat was upon the lake, I looked back and saw her standing in the little casement, framed in, like a sorrowing cherub, by the crimsoned vines.

CHAPTER L.

THE ANTIQUE BIBLE.

I SPENT a most anxious night, my heart racked by a thousand wild emotions. Need I describe them? Has any human being the power of conveying to another in words the storm of jealousy, compassion, rage, and love that filled my bosom? I know that there is a great want of dignity in acknowledging that I still loved this man, that I could for an instant think of him without virtuous detestation; but I am writing of a human heart as it was, not, perhaps, as it should have been. To me George Irving seemed two beings. The man I had known, generous, wise, impetuous, all that my heart acknowledged to be grand in humanity; and the man I had heard of, treacherous, full of hypocrisy, and vile in every aspiration. I could not reconcile these clashing qualities in my mind. To my reason, George Irving was a depraved, bad man; but my heart rejected the character, and always turned leniently toward the first idea it had formed. While I pitied Cora from the bottom of my soul, and loved her so dearly that no sacrifice would have been too costly a proof of this devotion, there was jealousy

in my heart that embittered it all. Alas, it is often much easier to act right than to feel right.

When I went for Cora, the next day, she took me to an oaken cabinet in her room, and with a sad smile—for all her pretty smiles had a shade of sadness in them now—asked me to examine some old books that lay huddled together on the shelf.

“It is singular,” she said, “but your name is written in some of these books, and Zana is a very uncommon name. Would you like to see how it is used?”

She took up a small, antique Bible, and after unclasping the cover of sandal-wood, on which some sacred story was deeply engraved, placed it open in my hands. On the fly-leaf was written, in a clear and very beautiful hand,

“Clarence, Earl of Clare, to his wife Aurora.”

A date followed this, and lower down on the page was a register, in the same bold writing, dated at the hamlet, some months after the presentation lines were written. This was the register :

“Born, June —, Zana, daughter of Clarence, Earl of Clare, and Aurora, his wife.”

The book fell from my hands ; I did not know its entire importance, or what bearing it might have on my destiny, but my heart swelled with a flood of gratitude that almost overwhelmed me. I had no idea of its legal value, but the book seemed to me of inestimable worth. In it were blended, in terms of honor, the names of my parents ; how it came there I did not ask.

Cora stooped down to recover the book, but I seized it first, exclaiming, amid my sobs,

“It is mine—it is mine, Cora ! Cora, I bless you—God will bless you for giving me this great happiness.”

We went down to the lake, where Chaleco waited with the little boat. He looked hard at me, as I came round the tiny cove, where he lay as if in a cradle, rocking upon the bright waters as they flowed in and out, forming ripples and ridges of diamonds among the white pebbles of the beach.

"What is it, Zana?" he said, springing ashore, as Cora seated herself in the boat, and interrogating me in a whisper on the bank. "You look sharp set, like a hawk when it first sees its prey. What has happened up yonder?"

I took the antique little Bible from under my shawl, and opening it at the blank leaf, pointed out the writing.

He read it two or three times over, and then thrust the book into his bosom. His face was thoughtful at first, but as he pondered over the writing, muscle by muscle relaxed in his dark features, and at last they broke forth in a blaze of the most eloquent triumph; his questions came quick upon each other, like waves in a cataract.

— "Where did you get that? Is it all? Who has had possession so long? Speak, Zana, I must know more."

"Why, is it so important?" I inquired, excited by his look and manner.

"Important! why, child"—— but he checked himself, inquiring more composedly how I came in possession of the book.

I told him how it had been pointed out by Cora. Without more questioning, he stepped into the boat, and bade me follow him.

When we were all seated, and the boat was shooting pleasantly across the lake, Chaleco began, in a quiet, indifferent manner, to converse with Cora. At first she was shy and reluctant to answer him, but his manner was so persuasive, his voice so winning, that it was impossible to resist their charm. After awhile he glided into the subject of the book, speaking of its antique binding, of the rare perfume which she might have noticed in the precious wood, and he went on to explain that it was used of old in the building of the Tabernacle. All this interested Cora greatly, and when he began to wonder how this singular volume could have found its way into the farmer's dwelling, she commenced to conjecture and question about the probabilities with more apparent earnestness than himself.

"The old people might perhaps know," she said. "Now I think of it, they did tell me of some persons, a gentleman, lady and little child that lived with them long ago—probably they left the book ; but then, how came Lord Clare's name in it?"

"Yes, sure enough," murmured Chaleco, cautious not to interrupt her.

"Besides, Lady Clare's name was not Aurora, and he never would have lived here with that beautiful hunting-seat only five miles off, you know."

"That is quite true," acquiesced Chaleco, while I sat still, listening keenly to every word.

"You see," continued the young girl, quite animated on the subject, "you see how impossible it is that the writing means anything ; but it is in other books—that is, names are written in them, Clarence sometimes, sometimes Aurora, now and then, both names ; but, Zana, I have never found that but once."

Chaleco fell into thought, and the oars hung listlessly in his hands for some minutes. At last he spoke again, but on indifferent subjects, about the lightness of the air, and the beautiful, silvery glow that shimmered over the waters. But once in a while he would quietly revert to the book again, till I became impressed with its importance to a degree that made me restless for more information.

After sailing around and across the lake for several hours, we drew up at a little island scarcely half a mile across, that lay near the centre of the lake, green as a heap of emeralds, notwithstanding the season was advanced, and embowered by cedar and larch trees, with the richest and most mossy turf I ever trod on, carpeting it from shore to shore.

Chaleco brought forth a basket of provisions from his boat, and bade us wander about while he prepared our dinner. We waited to see him strike fire from two flint stones that he gathered from the bank, and kindle a quantity of dry sticks that lay scattered beneath the trees. When he had spitted a fowl, which, gipsy like, he preferred to cook himself after the sylvan fashion, we went away, and sat down under a clump of

larch trees, sadly and in silence, as was natural to persons whose thoughts turned on a common and most painful subject.

I had resolved, there and then, to make my last appeal to the infatuated child. She must have guessed this from my silence and the gravity of my face, for she became wordless as myself, and as I glanced anxiously in her eyes they took the sullen, obstinate expression of one prepared to resist, and, if driven to it, defy.

We sat down together upon the grass. The delicate green foliage of the larches quivered softly over us, and the brown leaves of some trees that had felt the frost, rustled through the air and spotted the turf as with the patterns in a carpet. We remained a long time gazing on these leaves, in sad silence, but holding each other by the hand, as was our habit when little children. My heart was full of those dear old times ; it killed me to think that they were gone forever—that again on this earth Cora and I could never be entire friends, friends between whom no subject is forbidden, no respect lost. When I thought of this, and knew that the impediment lay in my heart as much as it could in her conduct, the future for us both seemed very hopeless. I can hardly describe the feelings that actuated me. Perhaps they arose from the evil felt in my own person, the result of a step like that which Cora had taken, entailed by my mother. True, the cases were not alike ; my poor gipsy mother had not sinned consciously ; no high moral culture had prepared her to resist temptation ; no fond parent graced her with his love ; but her act had plunged me, her innocent child, into fatal troubles that must haunt me though life.

It is possible, I say, that these thoughts prevented me feeling all the charity that would have been kind for the poor girl at my side ; perhaps, and this is most probable, I could not forgive the companionship of her error, for it is a terrible trial to feel that one you cannot entirely respect is preferred to yourself. In striving thus to analyze the feelings that made me drop Cora's hand for a time as we sat silently together, one thing was certain, I did not cordially love her with the affec-

tion of former years. Still, feelings swelled in my heart stronger and more faithful than love—gratitude, and my solemn promise to the good father; compassion for her, not unmixed, but powerful enough to have commanded any sacrifice; a firm desire to wrest her from the man who had wronged us both; all these motives influenced and urged me on to rescue that poor girl, if human eloquence and human will could accomplish it.

I attempted to speak, but my throat was parched and my faculties all lay dead for the moment; but struggling courageously with myself, I took her hand, pressing it between my own cold palms; "Cora," I said, still in a whisper, for my voice would not come, "have you thought all this over? will you go with me to your father? Remember, love, he is ill and may not live."

The hand began to tremble in mine, but she turned her face away.

"Let the subject drop," she said, in a voice low and full of pain, like mine; "it is of no use talking, I will not leave him. It would kill us both; I should perish on the way."

Now my voice returned—my heart swelled—words of persuasion, of reason, rose eloquently to my lips. I reasoned, I entreated, I portrayed the disgrace of her present position, prophesied the deeper shame and anguish sure to follow. I described the condition of her father in words that melted my own heart and flooded my face with tears. I prostrated myself before her, covering her dimpled and trembling hands with my tears, but all in vain. My passion was answered with silence or smothered monosyllables. She suffered greatly; even in the excitement of my own feelings I was sure of that. At length she broke from me, and rushed off toward the beach, evidently determined to protect herself from my importunity by the presence of Chaleco.

I had no heart to follow her, but went away in another direction, walking rapidly toward the opposite extremity of the island.

CHAPTER LI.

THE ISLAND COVE.

As I neared a tiny cove that shot up like a silver arrow into the green turf, I was surprised to find the gay streamers of a pleasure boat floating over the rushes that edged the cove. With my tearful eyes and flushed countenance, I was in no condition to meet strangers, and turned to retrace my steps, heart-sick, and at the moment recoiling from the sight of anything human. Scarcely had I walked twenty paces, when footsteps followed me, and some one called me by name. I looked around and saw Mr. Upham coming up from the boat. I would not appear to fly from this man, though my heart rose against him in detestation.

"Zana," he said, approaching me more slowly after I paused, and speaking with forced cheerfulness, "how came you here, of all places in the world; are you the goddess of this little island—a fairy? In the name of everything beautiful, explain this meeting?"

I did not at first reply; indeed it was difficult to account for my presence thus alone on a remote spot never visited perhaps once a year. Important, as I felt secrecy to be, I could not speak of Chaleco or explain anything regarding Cora, whose position, above all things, must be kept from a man so intimate with the Clares. I attempted to answer in his own light way.

"The spirits of air and water do not offer themselves so readily, sir; I came from the little public house yonder, in a very commonplace boat."

"Then you are alone?" he questioned, with a quick sparkle of the eye, that filled me with courage rather than terror.

"At present, yes."

"And how long have you been in Scotland, may I presume to inquire?"

"A very short time."

"But you are not all this distance from home alone?"

"No, I have friends with me."

"Oh, yes, old Turner, I suppose. And now, sweet Zana, let me say how happy, how very happy I am to meet you again; it seems like a dream."

It was impossible that I should not feel the deprecating humility of his manner; besides, what had I ever received from this man but kindness? His only fault was that of having offered love, protection, honorable marriage, when all others of his race shrunk from me as if I had been a leper. Still there was aversion in my heart; and I walked on, but not in the direction of our boat. He followed me.

"Can you forgive it, Zana, that I am still true;—that I cannot cease to love you?"

"It is not a crime to love any one," I answered, touched by his earnestness. "I do not scorn, but am grateful for all kindness!"

"Then you will listen to me?—you will yet be mine? I will protect you, Zana, in the face of all these haughty Clares. I am now independent."

"It cannot be," I said, firmly, but not with the austere repulsion of former days. "I shall never love—never marry—my destiny is fixed."

"Oh, Zana," he said, "why do you repulse me thus? What have I done to deserve it? Have not all others forsaken you?"

"Alas! yes!" I said, weeping.

"Have they not treated you worse than a Russian serf or negro slave, while I have always been firm in my devotion, true as heaven itself in my love? Is this love at such times nothing, that you cast it so scornfully away?"

"I do not cast it away scornfully, but am grateful, very grateful; still it is impossible that I should ever love you, or become your wife."

"Tell me why, Zana!"

"Because I have no power over the affections of my own heart; they are the only tyrants I cannot overcome," I said.

"But give me time; only endure my presence," he persisted, seating himself by me so gently that I was almost unconscious of the act; "these tyrant affections must yield to the power of love like mine."

I shook my head and made a motion to rise, but he held me down with a gentle pressure of his hand on my arm.

"Can you—can you know, my Zana, for *I will* call you mine this once—can you know how much love you are trampling to death?"

"I only know that no one feeling in my heart answers to it."

"And yet, oh, heavens, how I have lavished the first fruits of my life away upon this one hope! all other women were as nothing—to me. The proud Estelle, before whom Irving bends like a slave, and Morton in infatuation, could not win a thought from a heart too full of you for anything else. And little Cora, whose beauty and childish grace divided Irving's heart with Estelle, was to me vapid and uninteresting, because my soul had room for but one idol, and that idol Zana!"

I grew heart-sick and felt myself turning pale. Was it true?—could the heart of man be so vile? George Irving the slave of Estelle, and Cora, my poor Cora!—

"You speak of Irving," I said, in a voice that shook, though I made great efforts to compose it; "and of Estelle—tell me—tell—where is that lady?"

"What! are you ignorant that she is in Scotland, she and her mother, consoling the countess, and only waiting for the decencies of mourning to be over, for the wedding?"

A faintness seized me. Poor, poor Cora, this would kill her, it was killing me. Estelle Irving, *her* husband, the thought was a pang such as I had never felt before; to Cora I could have given him up, but Estelle, from my soul I abhorred her.

"You are silent, Zana," said my companion. "You will reflect on what I have said. Remember it is not the penniless

tutor who would have divided his crust with you before, who asks your hand now ; I possess expectations—certainties that even the haughty Estelle would not reject. The Marston Court living is one of the best in that part of England ; I have already taken orders.”

“ But I thought the Marston Court living was promised to Mr. Clark, poor Cora’s father,” I exclaimed.

“ By Lord Clare, yes ; but his sister, you know, has her own ideas, and since that unpleasant affair of the daughter, she refuses to think of it.”

“ Oh, Cora ! Cora ! what have you done !” I cried, weeping bitterly ; then struck with sharp indignation, I looked up, dashing the tears aside. “ And that lady—that vile, unwomanly countess—she dares to punish a good old man for the sins of his child, while she urged *him*, the traitor, who tempted her to ruin, into a position which compels him to abandon her.”

“ Of whom do you speak ?” he asked, almost in a whisper, so deeply had my desperate words excited him.

“ You know—you know !” I said, breaking forth afresh ; “ why force me to utter that detested name ?”

He took my hand. I did not withdraw it, for, at the moment, even his sympathy was welcome. Sighing deeply, he lifted it to his lips. I arose, determined to leave.

“ You will not leave me thus without answer, without hope ?” he said.

“ I have but one answer to give, and no hope,” was my firm reply.

He looked at me an instant, growing pale as he gazed.

“ You love another still, and believe he loves you,” he said, with a slow curve of the lip.

“ Hold !” I cried, stung with shame at the remembrance that I had once confessed this love and gloried in it ; “ I do not love another. It is not in my nature to give anything but detestation to treachery and vice like his.”

“ Then spite of your words I *will* hope,” he cried, seizing my hand and kissing it.

Before I could remonstrate he was gone, disappearing down a grassy hollow that sloped to the little cave where his boat was lying. As he sprang into the boat, I saw, out upon the lake, lying sleepily on the water, another shallop in which a single fisherman sat with a rod in his hand. His face was toward me, and it seemed that he was gazing upon the spot where I stood. How long this solitary individual had been upon the lake I could not conjecture, but my heart told me who it was ; the nearness of his presence held me in a sort of fascination, and, like one in a dream, I saw the boat glide toward the shore, and Irving spring out—a moment, and we stood face to face.

We gazed at each other breathlessly. He was much excited, and looked upon me with an air of impetuous reproach.

"It is you, then, and here, Zana—I did not believe it—I would not believe it even now, the whole thing seems false !"

"You did not expect to find me in this place, I can well believe," was the sarcastic reply that sprang to my lips.

"No," he said passionately, "I did not ; they told me you had fled from home in the night ; but that you would come here, and that I should find you thus, the thought would have seemed sacrilege. Great heavens, is there nothing trustworthy on earth ?"

His passion confounded me. By his words one would have thought me an offender, not him. I did not know how to reply, his air and speech were so full of accusation. He saw this and came close to me.

"Zana," he said, in a voice rich with wounded tenderness, "leave this place ; go back to Greenhurst, Turner will receive you as if this miserable escapade had never been. This is no shelter for you ; these honest old people up yonder are too good for the cheat practised upon them."

"Cheat—I—explain, sir ! your language is incomprehensible," I cried, breathless with indignation. "If there is imposition, let him that practises it answer ; this air of reproof ill becomes you, sir !"

"I may have been too rude, Zana, but the shock, the pain of finding you here—for I saw all that passed on the island, and hoping still that distance had deceived me, came to convince myself."

"Convince yourself of what?" I questioned.

"Of your unworthiness, Zana."

His voice sunk as he said this, and tears came into his eyes.

"Of my unworthiness?" I said, burning with outraged pride.

"In what one thing have I been proven unworthy?"

"Are you not here?—have you not fled from your natural protectors?"

"And your mother has allowed a doubt on this question to rest on me, even with you!" I said, calmed by the very force of my indignation. "Listen; I left home because it was the only way to save my benefactors from being turned helpless upon the world by your countess mother. I left secretly, well knowing that if those good people knew the price I paid for their tranquillity, they would have begged on the highway rather than consent to my departure. I had one other friend in the world, an elderly man of my mother's people. He is a safe and wise person, and with him I go to the tribe from whence my mother fled when the curse of your uncle's love fell upon her."

"But this is not the way to Spain. The man who has just left you cannot be that friend," he answered; "how came you here with him in the hills of Scotland?"

"I came to save"——

I broke off suddenly, struck with the imprudence of informing him that my object was to rescue Cora from his power.

"To save whom? oh, speak, Zana! let me believe your object here a worthy one."

This was strange language. Had he not guessed already that my love for poor Cora Clark had brought me to the highlands? Such hypocrisy was sublime; I almost found admiration for it rising in my heart.

"See," I cried, pointing out Chaleco, who stood at some distance on the shore, "yonder is the man with whom I left Greenhurst, and with whom I leave these hills in less than twenty-four hours."

He stepped a pace forward, searching Chaleco with his eyes. The cloud went softly out from his face, and when he turned a look of confidence had supplanted it.

"Zana, is this the truth?"

"Why should I tell you aught but the truth?" I answered.

He looked eagerly into my eyes; his own flashed; his face took the expression of one who forms a sudden decision.

"And you leave to-morrow?"

"Yes."

"And for Granada?"

"For Granada, I suppose."

"With that man, and no other?"

"With no other *man*," I answered, laying an emphasis on the word man; but he did not seem to heed it as I expected.

"Zana, one word more—answer from your soul—do you love me yet?"

Outraged and insulted, I drew myself up. "How dare you, the promised husband of Estelle, the lover of—of"—Passion stifled me, I could not utter Cora's name.

He seemed surprised.

"I am not the promised husband of Estelle; I love no woman living but yourself, Zana."

"Me?—can you say that here—here, and not shudder at the treason?"

"I can say it anywhere, Zana."

He looked sincere, his voice was sweet as truth, and so like it that a thrill of exquisite joy stirred my whole system as I listened.

"You believe me, Zana?"

I thought of Cora, and could not answer. Had he in truth ceased to love her? Could villany so deep appear so honest? He mistook my silence and went on.

"Forgive me, Zana, if I read my answer in that bright face. You love me as I love you."

I made an effort to contradict him, but the words died in my throat, and he went on.

"It is true, Lady Catherine desires me to marry another; but while you love me I never will. True she would cast me off and leave me adrift on the world for seeking you as I have this day; but I love you, Zana; speak but the word, and I will take you by the hand, lead you to her presence, and proclaim you my wife."

"Not me—not me; there is another whom you must so proclaim."

He did not heed me, but went on impetuously as at first.

"My mother may disown me; thank God, she cannot forever disinherit; we may have struggles; but what then? we have youth, strength, ability and love to conquer all. Come with me now, and in ten minutes all the laws under heaven cannot separate us."

"In ten minutes?" I questioned, thinking of poor Cora with painful self-abnegation, for never was a heart tortured like mine; "ah, if ten little minutes can redeem your obligations to her, why wait? make this other your wife to-day."

"Can you counsel this, Zana? Even you desire me to wed a woman whom I neither love nor respect?"

The blood began to burn in my veins. How dare he speak thus of the poor girl whose sole fault was her fatal affection for himself? These indignant thoughts sprung to my lips, but as I was about to utter them, Chaleco came up. Irving saw him, and addressed me hurriedly once more.

"Speak, Zana, before yon strange guardian comes. I give up all—I offer all; speak, and you are my wife."

"Never!" I exclaimed, almost fiercely, "never, so help me heaven, will I marry a man whose honor binds him to another, and that other"——

"Enough!" he exclaimed, wringing my hand hard, and dropping it; "you never loved me; farewell!"

He turned away and darted around a neighboring rock. When Chaleco came up his boat was far out on the lake, and I sat watching it with the heaviest heart that ever cumbered a human bosom.

"What does this mean? Who was the young man who left you just now?" said Chaleco, looking after the boat suspiciously, as he entered.

"It was George Irving; he wished to make me his wife"—I could not go on, my voice was choked by sobs.

"His wife?" said the gipsy, with a scornful laugh; "so he has found out the old books, has seen the register, knows the road to save himself—cunning young fellow!"

I looked at Chaleco in astonishment; his hateful laugh annoyed me terribly.

"What is the meaning of this, these old books? how could they affect him or his offer? he knew before that I was Lord Clare's child?"

"But he did not know before that you are Lord Clare's heiress, a countess in your own right—one of the richest women in England?"

"Are you mad, Chaleco, raving mad?"

"Almost—but with joy, my Gitanilla. Listen! your mother was married to Lord Clare. I do not speak of the Alhambra ceremony, but here, legally by the laws of Scotland, under which you were born. In this country, a man has but to live with a woman, acknowledge her as his wife, before witnesses, and she is a legal wife, her children legal heirs before any court in Great Britain. We have this proof here, in Lord Clare's own writing, in the old people with whom he left your mother."

"And how did you know of this law, Chaleco?"

"Zana, there is not a thing that could affect you which I have not studied to the centre. Half my life has been given up that you might prosper; and now, my beautiful countess, comes our triumph."

With these triumphant words Chaleco went back to his fire again.

CHAPTER LII.

THE SHEEP-FARMER AND HIS WIFE.

I LEFT the rock which had sheltered me, and went in search of Cora, resolved at once to expose the perfidy so cruelly enforced upon me. I found her sitting drearily beneath the larches. At my approach she lifted her head with a look of sullen apprehension, as if she dreaded further importunity. I was terribly excited, and breathless, and doubtless pale. It was impossible for me to begin my painful subject with delicacy or caution.

"Cora," I said, "Cora, I have seen him—he is a wretch—he is infamous!"

"Seen him!—seen him! when? where?" she cried, looking wildly around.

"Yonder," said I, almost lifting her from the earth and dragging her forward to a point from whence the boat could be seen close by the opposite shore; "yonder he goes; I have been pleading with him in your behalf. I besought him not to leave you with this terrible reproach on your name."

"Well, well," she gasped.

"He refused—he spoke of you as a person whom he could not respect."

"No—no! not that! not that!" she almost shrieked, clenching her hands together.

"Worse, Cora, worse—he dared to offer his love to me—his vile, traitorous love. Before this he has done the same thing; but now it was more direct, more passionate. He offered to brave Lady Catherine, and break all ties for my sake, this very day."

I paused in this headlong speech; my words had turned her

to marble. She stood thus white and rigid for a moment, then, like a statue hurled from its support fell prone upon the earth; her face downward and clutching the turf with both hands.

I shrieked and fell back from her in dismay, startled by the suddenness of her fall.

She remained still, and but for a faint quivering of her fingers in the grass, I should have believed that she had dropped down dead.

"Cora!" I cried, "Cora, my poor Cora, are you hurt?"

I bent down and attempted to lift her from the earth, but she shrunk from me moaning and shuddering. This repulse was not enough, I wound my arm around her and covered her golden hair with my kisses.

"Don't—don't, your kisses sting me! I would rather have vipers creeping through my hair!"

Wounded by her words, I desisted and drew back. After a little she moved, and I saw her face. It was pallid and stony; her eyes were heavy, and a violet tinge lay beneath them. A look of touching grief impressed that child-like mouth, which began to quiver as her eyes met mine.

"What?—what have I done, Cora?" was my tearful question, for the anguish in those sweet eyes filled me with unutterable dismay.

"I heard all that you said—all, every word!" she answered, laying her head helplessly down on the grass again. "Every word, Zana! You never told me a falsehood in your life, but I must not believe this; it would kill me here, at your feet."

My heart sunk. She knew how worthless he was now, when knowledge was despair. We had been rivals before she became a victim, that she knew also. No wonder she shuddered when I touched her—no wonder those sweet features were pallid, and those white fingers sought to work off the agony of her soul by tearing the senseless turf.

"Cora," I said, full of the most tender compassion, "I have done you no wrong, and never will. Since the day I was sure

that you loved him, I have never willingly been in his presence. Is this no sacrifice, Cora?"

"Then you did love him once?" she said, looking up, as if surprised. "No wonder, who could help it. But he, Zana, Zana, it kills me to think of that—he *loves you*; and I—I, O my God—my God, what have I done?"

She began to cry, and for a time her form was convulsed with tears. I, too, wept, for the same hand had stricken us both. When this storm of sorrow had passed, she lay quite passive and inert upon the grass, a single tear now and then forcing itself through her thick lashes, and a quiver stirring her lips as we witness in a grieved child.

During some minutes we remained thus, when she arose and began to arrange her hair, sitting on the ground, but her hands trembled, and the tresses fell away from them. I sat down by her and smoothed the heavy masses with my hand. She leaned toward me, sobbing.

"It does not feel like a viper, now, Cora!" I whispered.

She threw herself into my arms.

"Oh, Zana, Zana, what shall I do? What will become of me?"

I folded her in my arms, and kissed the quivering whiteness of her forehead, till it became smooth again.

"Come with me, love—come to the good father who is pining to death for a sight of his darling."

"Yes, I will go, Zana. I will never see *him* again—never, never. Oh, God help me—never!"

I could not avoid a throb of selfish joy as she said this; but grateful and relieved folded her closer in my arms.

"Come now," she said, struggling to her feet; "take me away. Let him go to the house and find the room empty, perhaps—perhaps that will make him feel."

She began to weep afresh, and fearing that she would sink to the earth again, I cast my arm around her. "Let me help support you, Cora."

"Yes, yes, for I am a feeble creature, Zana, but stronger in some points than you think !"

We moved on through the larch groves, uttering broken sentences like these, half tears, half exclamations, till a sudden curve brought us close to Chaleco. His sylvan meal was ready, but neither of us could partake a morsel of it. With natural tact he did not urge us, but observed everything, doubtless making his own comments. We entered the boat, and without asking a question the gipsy rowed us toward the opposite shore.

We ascended to the house, and conducted Cora at once to her room. All she asked was darkness and solitude. I had seen her on the bed, passive and worn out with the storm of sorrow that had swept over her. Chaleco joined me in the next room.

"Let her sleep if she can," he said ; "you and I must go in yonder ; we have some questions to ask of the old people."

Chaleco took me to the kitchen. An old woman was on the hearth, spinning flax ; and at a back door where the sun lay warmly, sat a stout old man smoking. I had not seen, or more probably not observed this couple before, but now they struck me as familiar, like persons lost sight of from childhood. Chaleco went out and sat down by the old man, while I drew toward the woman, and asked some questions regarding her work. She gave a little start, looked up, and evidently disappointed, began fumbling in her pocket for a pair of horn spectacles, which were eagerly placed across her nose.

Never did I undergo a perusal of the face like that. It seemed to me that the grey eyes under those glasses grew keen and large as they gazed. At length she started up, breaking the thread from her distaff, and hurried toward the back door with every appearance of affright.

"Guidman—guidman, coom here," she said, "coom and see the young gipsy leddy ! As God is above all, she is here, body and soul !"

"Gang awa, woman, these new fangled barnacles are deceiving things. Ye dinna see as ye did," answered the old man,

deliberately knocking the ashes from his pipe, by tapping the bowl on his thumb nail.

"Well, then, look for yoursel, guidman," said the dame, taking me by the shoulders, and half pushing me toward the door.

When the old man's eyes fell on my person he stood up and dropped his bonnet.

"A weel, a weel !" he exclaimed, "wonders will never cease ; na dout it's the leddy hersel with hardly a year on her heed sin she went, years sine, with the bairn in her arms." Then turning to Chaleco, he said, "Ye wer speerin about the stranger leddy ; there she stans."

"But the lady you speak of would have been older than this," said Chaleco.

"It's just the truth," answered the Scotchman, sinking on his bench, "seventeen years wad na ha left her sa bonny, whil mysel an the guid wife ha sunk fra hale, middle-aged folk inta owld grey earlins—but then wha may the lassie be ?"

"You spoke of a child !"

"Aye, gude faith, it's the bairn grown to be what the mither was. Weel, weel, time maun ha it's ain—but wha may be the ladie hersel ?" "A-whow is it sae, an she sa bonny ?"

"You remember her well then ?" persisted Chaleco.

"Mind her, wherefore no what sud gin me forget her, or her gowden haired guidman, a bonnier pair n'er staid in shoon. It wad be na easy matter to forget them, I tell ye !"

"Then they were married ?"

"Wha iver cud doubt it, and their bairn born here ?" cried the staunch old man, proudly ; "d'ye think we harbor lemans ? There was guid reason why it sud na be clash'd about ; na doot the Earl of Clare was na ane to put shame on an honest man's name."

"Then he told you that he was married to the lady ?"

"Tell me, yes ; wha but himself sud tell me ?"

"And you will swear to this ?" questioned Chaleco, allowing none of the eagerness that burned in his eyes to affect his voice.

"Swear, d'ye think I wad say at any time in my life what I wad na swear till?"

"And the lady—what did you call her name?"

"Aurora ; it's a strange name, but my lard said it had a fine meanin, something about the dawn o' the day."

"Yes—yes, it was a pretty name—but when together how did they seem? Was he in the habit of calling her his wife? Did she call him husband?"

"Aye—aye, baith him an her ; she, pur thing, took great delight i' the name."

"Then you knew this man to be Lord Clare? Had you seen him often before?"

"Seen him? wha else learned him to shoot o' the hills and fish-i' the loch yonder?"

"And you would know this girl by your memory of her mother?"

"Sud I ken the lassie by mother's look, d'ye, speer?—sud I ken my ain bairn, think ye? The twa are as like as twa peas—the same blink o' the ee—hair like the wing o' the raven—a step like the mountain deer. Aye—aye, I ken her weel."

I drew near to the old man, impatient to learn more of my parents, and was about to interrupt him with questions ; but Chaleco promptly repelled me with a motion of the hand, giving a warning look which I dared not disregard.

Too much excited for a passive listener, I left them and entered Cora's sitting-room. This little chamber had a double interest to me now. It was doubtless the place of my birth. The furniture and ornaments so superior to the dwelling itself had been my mother's. I stood by the window looking upon the lake which had filled her vision so many times. Sad thoughts crowded upon me as I walked to and fro in the room, determined not to interrupt Chaleco with my impatience, and yet panting to hear all those old people had to say of my parents. Directly Chaleco and the old people came in, and once more the closet containing those precious books was searched. A few letters from Lord Clare to my mother, were found ;

Chaleco seized them eagerly, and sat down to compare them with my mother's journal, which he had never restored to me.

CHAPTER LIII.

CHALECO'S TRIUMPH.

WE were in London, Chaleco, Cora and myself. The gipsy chief sat at a small table reading some pages of manuscript that had been a little before brought to him. Cora lay upon the sofa, with one white hand under her still whiter cheek, gazing with her great mournful eyes upon the dim wall opposite.

I was watching Chaleco ; the burning fire in his eyes, the savage curl of triumph that now and then revealed his teeth, as we sometimes see in a noble-blooded dog, when his temper is up. This expression deepened and burned as he read on, leaf after leaf, to the end. He did not then relinquish the paper, but turned back, referring to passages and comparing them with others, sometimes remaining whole minutes pondering over a single line.

At last he laid the manuscript down, dashed his hand upon it with a violence that made the table shake, and turned his flashing eyes on me.

"It is so, Zana ; it is so !"

"What is it you have been reading to yourself ?" I inquired.

"Wait a minute—let me think it all over. Well, this paper is from the best solicitor known in the London courts. I laid your case before him, the Bible, some letters that I found among other books at the old sheep farmer's, and my own knowledge."

"Well," I said, "what does it all amount to?"

"Nothing but this, my little Zana, Aurora's child, the scouted, insulted, outraged gipsy girl is, beyond all peradventure, Countess of Clare."

"And Lady Catherine?"

"Is Lady Catherine still, nothing more."

"But her son?"

"Oh," replied Chaleco, with a hoarse laugh, "he is the pitiful dangler to a woman's apron strings that he ever was."

My blood rose, I could not endure to hear the man I had loved so deeply thus spoken of.

"Hush!" I said, looking at Cora, anxious to save her feelings rather than my own, "Irving does not deserve this; he is no idler, whatever you may think."

I had expected to see Cora angry, as I had been, by this scornful mention of her lover, but she lay perfectly still, unimpressed and listless, without a flush or a glance to prove the wounded feelings that were torture to me. This indifference, so unlike her usual impulsiveness, surprised us both. But for her paleness and the blue shadows under her great eyes, we could not have guessed how much she had suffered since our departure from Scotland. No sick child ever resigned itself more passively to a mother's arms than she had yielded herself to us, and no child ever pined and wasted away as she did. All her bloom was gone. Cold and delicate as wax was the hue of her countenance. The azure shadows I have spoken of, and the veins threading her temples, gave the only tinge of color visible in a face rosy as the dawn only a few weeks before.

She did not seem to hear us, though this was the first time we had mentioned her lover's name when she was by. Even Chaleco seemed to feel compassion for the poor child, and dropped his voice, drawing closer to me.

"She does not heed," he said, "but still it seems like hurting her when we speak of that young villain."

"Then do not speak of him," I rejoined, sharply; "where is the necessity?"

"But we must speak of them—they have possession of your rights."

"What are those rights?"

"A title—an immense property—power in this proud country—power to help the poor Caloes," he answered with enthusiasm—"the power to redeem your mother's name among the haughty souls that reviled her—to give back her memory to the gipsies of Granada pure as the purest among their women."

"But they murdered her—innocent as she was, they murdered her!" I cried, shuddering and cold with memories that always froze me to the heart.

A gloomy look stole over Chaleco's face; his hand fell loosely down, and he whispered huskily, as if to convince himself:

"I could not help it; she gave herself up. They all thought the stain of his unmarried lips was on her forehead. She would die—it was *he* that killed her, not the gipsies—never say it again while you live, Zana, never."

I could not answer, but felt myself turning white and cold. He saw it, and grasped my hand, crying out with fierce exultation:

"But she is avenged, and now that we have the power, this proud woman and vile boy shall bite the dust, Zana. We will strip them, humble them, trample them beneath our gipsy feet. Aurora shall be twice avenged."

"Let me think," I said, dreadingly pressing my forehead to still the pain there; "I have tasted this revenge once, and it was terrible; when such fruit falls, dare we shake the vine again?"

"Again and again," was the fierce cry, "till power itself fails. Are you thinking of mercy, child?"

"I am thinking of many things," was my vague answer; "but God will help me."

Chaleco sneered.

"He has helped us, if you choose to fancy it," he said;

"are not her enemies in the dust—have you not revenge in your grasp?"

"No," I said, filled with the holy spirit my soul had invoked, "no, Chaleco, God gives revenge to no human being; it belongs to him. The memory of my dead father is before me—never again will I wrestle with these weak, human hands for power which belongs to omnipotence alone."

Chaleco looked at me sternly; a dark frown was in his eyes.

"If I thought this," he exclaimed, grasping the paper as if about to rend it.

He stopped, and held the paper motionless between his hands. Cora had risen from the sofa, and was leaning forward, looking at us.

"You learned that of my father, Zana," she said, while a tender smile stole over her lips; "if anything troubles you, go back to him; I will."

I was touched to the heart by the pathos and sweetness of these words. My soul yearned towards the suffering child, and that instant the resolve which had been floating mistily through my brain took form and shape. If the disputed estates proved to be mine, I would so endow that gentle girl, that Irving would rejoice in the chance of redeeming his prosperity by a marriage with her. Her fame at least I might partially restore.

"You are right, my Cora; I did learn all that is good in me from that noble-hearted man. You and I should never have left his side."

"I know it," she answered, sighing heavily, and sinking back to the sofa again; "you can go back, as for me"——

Cora broke off and began to weep. I was glad of that, poor thing. Since the first day she had not wept in my presence after our adventure in the Highlands. I left her unmolested, and went on talking with Chaleco more connectedly than we had yet conversed. In a little time he convinced me that my birth was legitimate, and my claims as heiress to Lord Clare would scarcely admit of dispute. The chain of evidence was complete. Though driven away for a little time, Chaleco had

hovered around Greenhurst, till assured that I had found a protector, then he lingered in England under various disguises, till I was safe under the roof from which my mother had fled. More than once he had penetrated to my sick chamber, where I lay delirious with fever, when I was by chance left alone, or when the nurse slept at night. Again and again he had visited England after that, assuring himself still of my welfare and identity. In short, from the time of my mother's death he had never lost sight of me, and up to that period the evidence of old Turner, his wife, and the Scotch farmer, left no thread wanting in the tissue of my claim.

"And if this is so, what steps must be taken?" I inquired.

"They are taken," answered the gipsy, "Lady Catherine has been notified, so has her son."

"Well, have they returned any reply?"

"The lady is here."

"In London?"

"Yes, in London."

"Did the mother come alone?" I inquired, observing that Cora had risen to her elbow, and was eagerly regarding us.

"Feeling that, like myself, she was anxious to know if Irving was in town and was with the family, I asked the question, half in kindness to her, half to still my own craving desire for knowledge on this point.

"Lady Catherine, her son, and Mr. Morton came together."

Cora uttered a faint cry, and starting up began to pace the room, as if the mention of that name had stung her energies into painful activity.

Still I was not fully answered.

"And is no other lady with them?" I persisted.

"And what if there is, how should you care?" was the answer he gave, accompanied by a look so penetrating that I shrunk from it.

Cora also turned and gazed at me with her great, tearful eyes, as a gazelle might look at the hunter that had chased him down. I felt the whole force of that appealing look, but went on ask-

ing questions, determined to comprehend everything, and then act as my own soul should teach.

"And did they decide on anything?" I inquired.

"The mother wishes to contest—the son advises her to yield; their friends, as usual, are on both sides."

"And so nothing is settled?"

"Nothing."

"I will go to them myself; rest of good cheer, Cora, you shall not always be so miserable."

She gave me a wild glance.

"Be tranquil, and trust me, Cora," I said, full of my project for her happiness; "it is for you this good fortune has come."

"There is no good fortune for me on earth," cried the poor girl, clasping her hands, "don't, Zana, don't smile so; it will set me to hoping impossible things."

"Nothing is impossible," I said, smothering the selfish regrets that would, spite of my efforts, rise against the sacrifice I meditated. "To the strong heart there can be no impossibility—here there *shall* be none."

Cora came close to me, smiling so mournfully and shaking her head, as I can fancy Ophelia to have done, with a world of sorrow and one little glow of hope in her poor face.

"Perhaps he thought that I was within hearing, and so did all that to tease me."

As this soft whisper dropped from her lips, the determination of self-sacrifice grew strong within me. Had we stood at the altar, I think, at the moment, I should have given Irving up to her; she was so trustful and helpless. I seized upon the idea; better far was it that she should fancy anything rather than believe in his faithlessness after all that I intended for her.

"It was all unfeeling pleasantry, I dare say; careless flirtations, that meant nothing."

"Do you really think so?" she inquired, stealing closer and closer to my side.

"I do indeed think that he has no real love for any one but you, Cora."

"In truth?—in solemn truth, Zana?—oh, Zana, Zana, say that *you* cannot believe it again."

"I do not believe in his love for—for that other person," I said, shrinking from the utterance of Estelle's name.

"Solemnly, you think this, Zana?"

"Solemnly."

She drew a deep breath, looked at me so long that I could watch the joy as it broke and deepened in her violet eyes, and then, satisfied that I was sincere, sunk back to the sofa, with the most heavenly smile I ever saw beaming over her face. I sat down by her; she wove her arms around me and pressed her cheek to mine, trembling softly with that exquisite happiness which follows a crushed suspicion against those we love. I could not resist a pang of jealous envy, for it is much easier to make sacrifices to one that suffers, than to witness the joy which our self-bereavement gives. The contrast between the rich swell of happiness that broke in sighs from her lips, and the heavy sense of desolation that lay upon my poor heart, made me long to put her away.

But soon I felt her kisses wandering amid my hair and over my forehead, mingled with whispers of gratitude and smiles of hope. After all, Cora loved me, and I was making her happy. Most solemnly did I believe all that I had said of Irving. That he did not love Estelle I was certain; that self-interest had induced his professions to me I was equally convinced, for Chaleco's words had fastened upon me when he said that Irving had sought me because he knew of the evidence I had obtained regarding my own legitimacy; and Cora, when I asked if she had mentioned the register which she found to any one beside myself, answered, "only to him;" but the tutor, Mr. Upham, had read them long ago, when he lodged a season at the hill-side cottage.

Cora had told me this on the day we left the Highlands, and from that time I looked upon Irving's pursuit of myself as a mercenary effort to retrieve his own desperate fortunes by a marriage with his uncle's heiress. Mr. Upham, too; his inter-

ested pursuit was now fully explained; but for him I had scarcely time for a contemptuous thought, so resolute had my heart become on the sacrifice of its last hope. With these impressions, I could not believe that Cora had any rival in his heart, whatever his interests might dictate. So I soothed her, and strengthened the confidence that was bringing the roses back to her cheek, even then. Poor thing, she trusted me so implicitly, and her weary heart was so glad of rest after its anguish, that she believed like a child.

That night, I wrote to Mr. Clark, saying that his child was found, and that she trusted very soon to tell him her love in the dear parsonage.

With regard to him, also, I had my benevolent dreams. There was the Marston Court living. If Lady Catherine had no right to the estate, her power to appoint an incumbent to the living did not exist, but was mine; and dear Mr. Clark, God bless him, how my heart swelled at the thought of rescuing him from his present dependence, by appointing him rector instead of the man whose character had degraded the holy office! I went into no details, but wrote a cheerful letter, full of hope, determined to wait for the unfolding of events before I explained everything.



CHAPTER LIV.

IRVING AND HIS MOTHER.

I KNEW that the Clares had a town house in Picadilly, and quietly stealing out in the morning, when Chaleco was out, I called a hackney coach and drove there at once. A ponderous man, in mourning livery, opened the door, and looked well disposed to order me down the steps when he saw my humble equipage. But there was a native haughtiness in me that men

of his class are sure to recognize, and though new to the world, I was neither timid nor awkward ; besides assumption of any kind was certain to arouse all the contempt and resistance of my fiery nature.

I inquired for Lady Clare.

"She was in, and at breakfast ; would I call again?"

"No ; I must see the lady then."

"An appointment?"

"No ; but still my interview with this lady must be at once."

"He did not think she would admit me, her ladyship and Mr. Irving had been closeted with their solicitors all the morning."

"You will send up my name and inquire," I said weary with his objections, and conscious that this was my time to speak with Lady Catherine when fresh from her consultation with the lawyers.

My imperious manner impressed him ; he inquired my name.

"Zana."

His round eyes opened with astonishment. "Miss Zana, is it?" he said, after a moment of puzzled thought.

"Zana, that is all."

He beckoned a footman, and whispered with him. The man disappeared up some mysterious staircase in the back part of the hall. The porter returned, and seated himself in his great gothic chair, took a position, and began to eye me as stage kings sometimes survey the suppliants that come before them.

The footman came back, walking quickly, and with noiseless step, as well-bred servants usually do in England. Her ladyship would be happy to receive the young person.

I followed him in silence. Would her son be there? This thought made my limbs tremble, but I think no visible agitation marked my demeanor or my countenance.

Lady Catherine was in her dressing-room, with a small breakfast-table before her, covered with Sevres china and glittering silver. The delicate breakfast seemed yet untasted, save that one of the cups was stained with a little chocolate.

Lady Catherine arose, and though she did not come forward, stood up to receive me. It might have been the light which fell through curtains of pale, blue silk, but she certainly looked unusually white and haggard. I saw her thin hand clutch itself among the folds of her mourning gown, and her eyes wavered as they met mine.

There was an awkward silence as I advanced toward the table. I think she was struggling to speak calmly, for her voice was unnatural when she did address me.

"Be seated," she said falling back to her lounge, not with her usual languid ease, but abruptly, as if in need of support, "be seated, I—I am happy to receive you."

I sat down, firm and composed. He was absent, and as for that woman, there was nothing in her to discompose me. We seldom tremble where we do not respect.

"Your ladyship probably knows upon what subject I came," were my first quiet words.

I saw by the motion of her whole body that she could with difficulty restrain her rage.

"Yes, and I thank you for saving me another interview with your very singular friend," she said, with a smile that was intended to be playful, but faded to a sneer.

"What, madam, has Count Chaleco been with you?"

"If you mean that dark browed man who calls himself your protector, he has given us the honor of his company more than once."

"I do mean him, and he is my protector!" I answered, stung by her look and tone rather than by a comprehension of her words.

"Of course. No one would think otherwise. After eloping with him in the night from Greenhurst, visiting the Highlands, and domesticating yourselves together in London, there can be, I fancy, little doubt left on that point!"

I began to comprehend her meaning. Isolated as I had been from the world, and independent of its usages, I could not mistake the sneering expression of that evil face, had the words

failed to enlighten me. But I was not angry. Scorn of the very thought that she applied these vile imaginings to me curved my lips with a smile. I could not have forced myself into a word of explanation or defence. The woman seemed to me only a little more repulsive than before.

"Then, madam, if my friend has preceded me I shall have little to explain, and our interview will be more brief. You comprehend, doubtless, that evidence of Lord Clare's residence with my mother in Scotland, which constitutes a legal marriage, is in our possession ; that the best counsel consider me, and not your ladyship, the inheritor of his title and estates. Indeed, the record of my birth, in his own handwriting, where my mother is mentioned as his wife, is by the laws of Scotland a marriage in itself."

"Yes, all these things have been repeated to me ; but the opinion of lawyers, fortunately, is not exactly the decision of legal tribunals."

"Then you are determined to contest my claims?"

"I am not disposed to yield mine without contest, certainly."

"Madam," I commenced ; and now every nerve in my body began to tremble, for the great moment of my fate had arrived—"madam, in this contest, if it becomes one in an English court of law, the life and reputation of your only brother must be cruelly brought before the world ; would you make no sacrifice to avoid that?"

"But if this same brother was your father also, it is for you, not me, to save his name from the scandal of a public court," she rejoined, sharply. "The fact that he married Lady Jane while your mother was alive, I would willingly conceal."

"No, madam, that you mistake. My mother died months before Lord Clare's marriage?"

"How and when did she die?"

"The how does not concern your ladyship. As for the when, I was present when she died near the City of Granada, and though a child at the time, can never forget it ; would to God it were possible. After that—months after it must have been,

for we had travelled from Spain between the two events—I saw the cortége pass the tent where I lay, returning from my father's marriage with his last wife. In this he committed no legal fault—and let us hope intended no moral wrong—though a deep wrong it was, from beginning to end ; but he doubtless was unmindful of the singular law which made his first marriage binding.”

“Then what is there to conceal? Why should we shrink from investigation?” she cried.

“The wrong done to my poor mother, alas ! that remains, and I would do anything, give up anything rather than have it heaped upon my father's memory.”

“And what were these mighty wrongs, if—as you are trying to prove—he ever acknowledged her, a dancing gipsy beggar, a”——

“Hush !” said I, with a power that must have been imperative, “you shall not malign my mother.”

“Well,” she answered, waving her hand scornfully, “you are right. Her history cannot be publicly coupled with that of our house without leaving infamy upon a noble name.”

“Not *her* infamy, madam !”

“This is useless and impertinent, miss,” she cried, starting up fiercely ; “you came for some purpose. What is it ?”

“I came, if possible, to save the scandal of a law suit regarding the Clare earldom and estates. I would shield my father's memory, and redress the wrongs of one whose fate is dearer than my own, at any sacrifice.”

“And how is this to be done unless you yield at once these preposterous claims ?”

“Madam, your son !”

“Well, what of him ?” she cried sharply, and with gleaming eyes.

“The succession will be his when, when”——

“When I am gone, you wish to say, but that is a frail hope. I married when a child, and the difference between Irving and myself is so little.”

This vanity would have seemed out of character to one so full of haughty malice as the woman before me ; but extreme vanity is more frequently found connected with bad qualities than with good ones, so it did not surprise me.

"But with your son some compromise may be effected. You would doubtless rather surrender the unentailed estates to him, than to one so hateful to your ladyship as I am?"

"That may be readily supposed?"

"Well, madam, to one or the other you must resign them ; to me if you persist in useless and wicked resistance ; to him, if—if"——

"Well, if what?"

"If by marriage with the person whom I shall select, he secures the rights which I claim to himself."

"That is, if my son, like his uncle, will degrade himself with a gipsy stroller," she replied, with insulting bitterness.

"Madam, this is base ; that which I propose saves your son from degradation, does not impose it. It was not of myself I spoke!"

"Of whom, then? Is there another claimant?"

"No. As the legitimate and only daughter of Lord Clare, who died without will, I have the sole right to all that was his. You know that the courts will confirm this right, or I had never been thus admitted to your presence. Your eye wavers ; your lips curve in terror rather than scorn. In your soul you feel that to hold possession of this house for a day is rank usurpation ; your lawyers have told you all this before."

"How did you learn that?"

"From your face, madam—from the fact that you do not spurn me from your presence as of old."

She smiled, not scornfully, her blue lips seemed to have lost all strength for so strong an expression, but with a sort of baffled spite.

"And so you would take the estates and attach my son as an appendage—this is kind!"

"Madam, I will resign all right to these estates and title on

the marriage day of your son—not with me, the hated gipsy, but with Cora Clark, whom he loves, and who loves him. Greenhurst and the title to rest with you as if I had never existed—all the unentailed property to be divided between your son and Mr. Morton, whose rights we cannot honestly waive.”

Her eyes opened wide with astonishment. She fell back on her sofa, and folded a hand over them, as if ashamed of appearing startled by what I had said. At last she sat upright again and looked at me searchingly.

“You will do this?”

“I will!”

“Why?—your motives?”

The tears started. I felt them crowding to my eyes.

“I wish to see them happy.”

My voice faltered; but for her presence the agony at my heart would have burst forth in a wail.

“And that will make you happy?” she said, with an icy sneer. “You will remain and witness the joy your abnegation gives.”

“Never!” I cried, yielding to the anguish that was oppressing me. “I will go among my mother’s people—go”—I thought in my innermost heart—“go to the barrancas of Granada, to die of anguish as she did by violence.”

“And you will leave this country forever?”

“Madam, I will.”

“But this girl, this Cora Clark, where is she now? Mr. Upham, the new rector, sent down orders that her father should be removed from the parsonage—where has he gone? How are you sure that Irving cares for her, or would take her at any price?”

I shrank from exposing my poor friend’s weakness to the knowledge of that heartless woman; she seemed ignorant of her son’s perfidy, and its results in giving Cora to my protection. I rejoiced at this, and guarded the secret of their mutual fault as if it had been my own life.

"I am certain of it."

"But you are not of age to make a resignation of these fancied claims legal, even should I consent to unite my son to this nameless girl."

"I am of age to resist all action, and have a will strong as any law. If I am silent regarding my claims, who will or can urge them?"

"But we have only your word!" she said, softening in her tone, and interrupting her questions with intervals of thought.

"But in your heart you know that to be enough. Strive as you will, my truth will make itself believed."

She waved her hand, rising.

"Stay here, I will speak with my son. Perhaps you have not breakfasted; ring and the man will provide fresh chocolate. After all, this is a strange offer."



CHAPTER LV.

SELF-ABNEGATION.

LADY CATHERINE went out, and I was alone, trembling, helpless, filled with desolation—the poor, poor gipsy girl. What had Cora done that she should be made so happy, and I so miserable? I sat down stupefied with the blank darkness that had fallen around my existence. The estate, the pomp, the rank that I had given up were nothing; but Irving—oh, how my poor heart quivered and shrunk from the thought that he was another's forever and ever. In all the wide world, that desolate barranca in Granada seemed the only spot gloomy enough to conceal misery like mine!"

A full hour I remained with my elbow upon the little breakfast-table seated among the cushions, unmindful of their luxu-

rious softness as if they had been so many rocks heaped near me. I could only feel dumbly that with my own hand I had cast all hope from me. This thought revolved itself over and over in my mind, I could neither change nor shake it off.

At last the door opened and Lady Catherine came in, followed by her son. He was greatly changed. All the bloom of boyhood had settled into a look of thoughtful manliness ; his eyes, almost sad, were deeper and more piercing ; his manner, grave ; traces of anxiety lingered about his eyes and mouth, making one firm and leaving shadows beneath the other. He came close to me and rested one hand on the table. I did not rise, but sat trembling and helpless beneath the reproachful pride in his glance. The apathy had left me ; my heart swelled with the painful joy of his presence, and every nerve thrilled back its sympathy.

"My mother has told me of your proposal, Zana," he said, in a clear, but not untroubled voice ; "your wish is a generous one. The rights you would surrender are great, but I will not accede to this proposal."

I started so violently that one of the Sèvres cups fell to the ground. A cry almost broke from my lips. This reprieve from my own wishes filled me with joy.

"Why, why?" I could not ask these questions aloud ; they fell from my lips in broken whispers.

"Because I will not despoil you of your birthright—because I do not love the lady whom you propose for my wife."

"Not love her, Mr. Irving ; forbear !"

I could not go on ; his mother's presence checked me ; but once more my heart was filled with indignation at his audacity.

"Then you refuse?" I said, rising—"you refuse to render this poor justice to one who loves, who has"—

Again I checked myself. Lady Catherine was close to the table. Irving listened patiently, and kept his eyes fastened on my face, as if asking some further explanation.

"It is possible," I said, "that you think lightly of my claims, and thus reject the sacrifice I would make."

"No," he said, "I am satisfied that your claims to the estate are valid ; only this morning I joined my mother's legal counsel in advising her to yield possession at once."

"And this inheritance? Cora, too? Will you cast them both aside because it is Zana who offers them?"

He shook his head with a grave smile.

"The inheritance I can easily relinquish ; it is not large enough to purchase a heart like mine, Zana."

"George, George, reflect," said Lady Catherine, who had been listening with keen anxiety ; "the girl is beautiful ; her mother's family had noble blood in it."

"Mother, hush ; I will work, but not sell myself for your benefit."

I arose, shocked by the deep hypocrisy of the man. His look, his voice, his words, how noble they were ! His actions—the household traitor—how could he compel that face to look so firm and noble in its sin ?

"Madam," I said, turning to the mother, "persuade your son, for on no other terms can my father's estate remain with you or yours."

She bent her head, but did not speak. The woman seemed subdued ; all her sarcastic spirit had left her. At last she laid her hand on Irving's arm.

"George, George, remember there is no other way."

He turned upon her, smiling.

"Mother, we lived honorably and well before my uncle's death ; the same means are still left to us."

"But the title, the estates, I cannot give them up. Will you make no sacrifice to save me from this degradation?"

"Anything, mother, that an honorable man should ; but to barter myself, no."

I saw that Lady Catherine was becoming angry, and spoke,

"Madam, when I resign the inheritance, your son knows the terms. Take counsel—take time for thought. To-morrow, at this hour, I will come again, alone as now ; that will be our last interview."

My words struck home. Lady Catherine turned white as death, and by the glitter in her eyes I saw a storm of rage mustering ; I did not remain to witness it. Irving held open the door for me. Our eyes met as I passed out, and his seemed full of reproachful sorrow. Why could I not hate that man ?—why not hurl back scorn for treachery ?

Cora was asleep when I entered the little room which we occupied together. It was the sweetest slumber I ever witnessed—so calm, so full of infinite quietude. Worn out by the harassing sorrows of her situation, she had, up to the evening previous, been wakeful night and day, but the few words I had so rashly uttered fell like dew upon her eyelids, and all night long she had slept by my side tranquil as a bird in its nest ; in her hopeful serenity she had dropped away in dreams. Thus I found her with a smile upon her lips, and a soft bloom warming the cheeks that twelve hours before had been so pale.

My own words had done all this, and they were all a deception. I had deceived myself, and worse, worse a thousand times, had misled her also. How could I tell her this ?—how break up the exquisite calm of that repose with my evil tidings, for evil I now felt them to be ?

The sunlight fell through a half-closed shutter, kindling up the golden tresses of her hair, as they fell over the arm folded under her cheek, and lay in masses on the crimson cushion of the sofa. I sat down by her, watching those sun gleams as they rose brighter and brighter toward her forehead. They fell at last upon her eyelids, which began to quiver ; the dark brown lashes separated, and with a sleepy murmur the girl awoke.

“ Oh, you have come,” she said, flinging her arms around my neck ; “ dear, dear Zana, I have been dreaming.”

“ Dream on !” I answered, sadly ; “ if I only had the power to dream also !”

“ Why, what is the matter, Zana, your eyes are full of tears ?” she cried, looking eagerly in my face, and kissing it with passionate devotion. “ Where have you been ?”

"I have been to see him, Cora."

She held her breath, and looked at me—oh, how pleadingly—as if I could change the color of her fate, poor child.

"Well, Zana."

I could not endure that voice, those eyes, but flung my arms around her, and held her close to my bosom as I answered—

"Forget him, Cora. Let us both forget him. He is an ingrate, a"—

I could not go on, for her cold lips were pressed wildly to mine, and she called out—

"Don't, don't, Zana—don't speak such words of him!"

"He does not deserve this interposition, Cora; you cannot guess how much I was ready to sacrifice that you and he might be happy."

"And he would not listen?" she asked, falling sadly back from my arms. "Still you thought he loved me, and were so certain of it only last night."

"But I think it no longer. God help you, my poor Cora—with all this inheritance—and I offered it—I have no power to make him feel."

"And you tried to bribe him into loving me; that was unkind, Zana."

"No, Cora; other reasons which you do not comprehend influenced what I did, as well as a wish to make you happy. His mother, I think, would have yielded, but he"—

"His mother, Zana—he has no mother."

"In one sense, perhaps not; but Lady Catherine"—

"Lady Catherine."

"Yes, Lady Catherine, is she not George Irving's mother?" I cried, surprised by her bewildered look and words.

"Yes, surely; but then what is George Irving to me, or Lady Catherine either, save that she in some sort controls *his* fortunes?"

"Cora!" I almost shrieked, seizing her hands, "what is this? Who, who is the man? Tell me it is not George Irving that you love, and I will fall down and worship you."

"Why, Zana, are you wild? How should I ever think of another, and he in my heart always?"

"He—who? Speak, girl, or I shall indeed be wild!"

"You act very strangely, Zana. Only now you told me that you had seen Mr. Morton, and talked with him; you gave so many painful hints about him."

I seized her hands again, and forced down the tremulous hope in my heart.

"Cora, darling Cora," I said, interrupting my words with quick gasps of breath, that I had no power to stifle, "tell me clearly, use few words, or my heart will break with this suspense. Was the man with whom you left Greenhurst Henry Morton?"

My emotion terrified her. She grew pale, and struggled to free her hands.

"You know it was; are you going crazy? My fingers—my fingers, you crush them."

"And it was Morton?"

"Yes—yes!"

"And you have no love for Irving? He never said, never hinted that he wished you to love him?"

"He—no. Who ever put the idea into your head?"

I seized her in my embrace, and covered her forehead, her eyes, her hair, with rapturous kisses. I knelt at her feet, and wrung her little hand in my ecstasy till she cried out with the anguish.

"Kiss me, Cora, again, again; kneel down here, Cora, at my side, and thank God as I do. We shall be happy, darling, so happy—my head reels with the very thought of it—my heart is so full. Let me weep myself still here—here on my knees, with my forehead in your lap. Cora, Cora, it seems to me that I am dying!"

And now the tears came rushing up from the depths of my heart, and I lay upon Cora's lap, sobbing the agony of my old grief away, as a half-drowned man lies upon the beach where the storm has tossed him. Oh, how great was the wealth of

my existence that moment. Irving did not love another ; he was mine, mine, all mine !

Chaleco came in and interrupted us. He inquired the cause of my emotion, and I told him. The tiger that my first words brought to his eyes, crouched and cowered beneath the energy of my entreaties to be freed from the pledge I had given to bury myself with his tribe in Granada. In passion like mine there is almost irresistible eloquence, and my soul was burning with it. Perhaps I looked more like my mother, thus enkindled and aroused.

“Zana,” he said, and the first tears I ever saw in his fierce eyes, burned there like a diamond. “Zana, you ask a terrible thing. Like your mother, I swore a vow to Papita. You love my enemy and hers ; you cling to him and cast the gipsy aside. But even better than that, I loved her and her child. I give up my oath of vengeance. What is death, if Aurora’s child may live and love ?” Chaleco went out ; afterwards I remembered all the force of his words, but then my soul panted for solitude and thought. I spent the night alone, sleepless and happy as few mortals have the capacity of being on this earth.

I knew little, and cared nothing for the propriety of conventional life. On the day before, I had promised to return for Lady Catherine’s final answer to the proposal I had in my ignorance made. I went and inquired, not for her, but for Irving.

He came down to receive me, looking pale and depressed. His reception was cold, his look constrained.

To this day I cannot tell what passed between us during that interview. All that was in my heart I poured forth. I remember his astonishment and his rapture. But of what was said I have no distinct idea ; all was a whirl, a vortex of emotion.

A silence that seemed like heaven followed, and then we began to talk more rationally. Oh, the exquisite happiness of that entire confidence—the beautiful, beautiful joy of knowing that I was his affianced wife, the only person he had ever

loved! In the first sweet outgush of confidence, I told him everything. He seemed shocked and greatly surprised at Morton's perfidy; but when I told him of Upham, and the power he had exercised over our lives, by the cruel suspicions instilled into my belief, his indignation was so mingled with sovereign contempt of the man's pretensions, that he laughed while denouncing him.

"Poor fool," he said, "doubtless by some means he had obtained a knowledge of your heirship during our residence at my uncle's hunting lodge, where we spent several seasons. He is a shrewd man, our new rector. But Morton, I cannot think so badly of him. Believe me, Zana, there is some explanation behind all this. Morton is a reserved, perhaps irresolute man in some things, but I cannot think him base, though there was a time when I thought otherwise."

"And when was that?" I asked.

"It was rumored, Zana, that he had brought a companion with him to Scotland. I heard of your disappearance from Greenhurst at the same time, and believed you to be the inmate of that little farm-house. My mother joined in that belief."

"Poor Cora," I said, "the odium of her fault seems all to rest on me, her best friend."

"Let us wait before we condemn my friend," said Irving, generously. In his situation of unjust dependence may be found, perhaps, some excuse for all this. Believe me, dear one, Morton is not a dishonorable man."

"He is at any rate the rightful owner of Marston Court," I answered; "but with your leave, he shall only take possession of it as Cora's marriage portion."

Irving smiled, and then we began to talk of ourselves again. He drew me close to his side, bent his flushed face to mine, and whispered a thousand sweet words that have little meaning, except to the one heart, which receives them like drops of honey-dew. In our great happiness we did not notice that the door had opened, and Lady Catherine stood in the entrance coolly regarding us.

We arose together, his arm still around me, his flushed face becoming serious and calm. "Mother," he said, "receive Zana kindly, for this morning she has promised to be my wife."

"Your wife! and is there no other way?" faltered the haughty woman; "must this sacrifice be made?"

"Sacrifice!" exclaimed Irving, looking down upon me with a glance of proud affection; "why, mother, I have loved the child from the first moment I saw her protecting that deer so bravely. It was this love which rendered it impossible for me to marry another."

The great love in my heart brought with it a gentle humility unknown to my nature before. I withdrew myself from Irving's arm, and went up to his mother, blushing and with tears in my eyes.

"O, Lady Catherine, do not look so coldly on your son. Love me a little for his sake."

She reached forth her hand, drew me toward her, and with a regal bend of the head, kissed my cheek.

"My son," she said, resigning herself gracefully to the inevitable, "my son, you see that a mother can make sacrifices, even though her child may refuse them."

Before Irving could express the gratitude that broke from his eyes at this unexpected concession, Lady Catherine had withdrawn from the room. Then I remembered how long my own stay had been, and hastened with breathless shame to the hackney coach that still waited for me at the door.

The day was beautiful, and I dismissed the carriage, resolved to walk awhile before entering our lodgings. As I turned a corner a gentleman passed me hurriedly, turned back, and spoke,

"Zana," he cried—"Zana, I have met you at last; let me hope you are disposed to recognize me as a friend, at least."

I was too happy for indignation, otherwise his audacity would have met with a sharp rebuke. Emboldened by this gentleness, he moved on at my side, pouring forth a torrent of low-voiced protestations. A spirit of mischief seized upon me, and I answered him with playful evasions. He evidently was quite

ignorant that the secret of my legitimacy, doubtless so long known to himself, was in my possession.

"In a few days," he said, impressively, "I shall be enabled to claim you before the whole world. I have already taken orders, and am now going to render Lady Clare my thanks for the Marston Court living."

I felt a smile quivering on my lips; for the first time the consciousness that my inheritance had endowed me with power, came with force to my heart.

"It will be a useless visit," I said, very quietly. "Lady Clare withdraws the promise she has made. A man who has so long practised deceit and falsehood, is no proper person to lead others on their way to heaven. Let me answer you, Mr. Upham, the Marston Court Rectory will receive another incumbent than yourself."

He stood aghast, looking at me. "But the living is as good as mine already. I have even notified the curate at Greenhurst to leave the parsonage."

"No doubt; but if he leaves Greenhurst it will most certainly be to take possession of the Marston Court Rectory."

Upham forced a laugh.

"You speak positively for Lady Clare!" he said.

"I speak simply for myself, Mr. Upham."

That instant I reached the door of our lodgings and went in, leaving my clerical friend in a bewildered state on the sidewalk.

I entered the little parlor, expecting to find Cora there alone, but to my astonishment young Morton arose from the sofa where she was seated, and came toward me, a little pale and anxious, but with more dignity than I had ever witnessed in him before.

"Zana," he said, "I have just come down from Scotland in search of this dear runaway!"

I drew back, annoyed. Both his manner and words offended me.

"Oh, tell her, tell her at once!" cried Cora, springing up, with a face like an April day, all flush, tears and smiles. "Tell her it was your wife who ran away from you, like a naughty,

wicked, jealous little wretch, as she was. Zana, dear Zana, we were married all the time, but I had promised him, and could not tell, you know, because he was quite sure that Lady Catherine never would have given up any of the property, if she found out that he had fallen in love with such a poor, foolish-hearted little good-for-nothing as I was. There, Mr. Morton, do sit down and tell her all about it. Remember she is Lady Clare now, the best, most generous, the—the—well, well ; no matter if I am wild, that awful secret is off my heart ; I feel like a bird. Oh, if I had but wings to fly away and tell my blessed, blessed papa."

Morton sat down upon the sofa, gathering that beautiful young wife to his bosom, and hushing her into quiet with his silent caresses.

"It was wrong and cowardly, I know," he said, "but we were both madly in love, with no one to heed us. Lady Catherine was determined that I should follow her to Scotland, where she promised to have papers prepared, returning a portion of my old uncle Morton's estate to me. Separation seemed dreadful to us both. It was a wild, rash act ; but I persuaded Cora to come with me, forgetting all the evil that might spring from concealment, and afraid of Lady Catherine's displeasure, for she seemed anxious for some excuse to delay the transfer. I persuaded Cora to conceal our marriage, and stay quietly in the old farm-house, till Lady Catherine's caprices could no longer affect us ; but my visits were necessarily few, for some vague rumor of her presence in Scotland reached Lady Catherine, and I was compelled to be cautious. The poor child grew restless, sad, and at last doubtful of my integrity. She was pining herself to death when you found her, and innocently completed her belief in my faithlessness."

"I had made up my mind to brave everything, and avow that she was my wife, on the very day that Cora left Scotland. It was a desolate reception that the old people gave me. Cora, I could feel for the loneliness of your father, then."

"Let us go—let us go to him!" cried Cora, starting up, "it will never be quite heaven till we get home."

"Not yet, wait a little, and we will all go together," I said, turning to leave the room, and without waiting for a reply, I stole away, leaving those two young hearts with each other, too full of my own exquisite happiness for anything but the selfishness of solitude. * * * * *

We entered Greenhurst quietly, and after nightfall, Lady Catherine, Cora, Moreton and myself. Irving was to follow us in a few days, but Chaleco, to whom I had given all Papita's gold for the use of his tribe, remained behind. We drew up at the parsonage. The curtains of the parlor were drawn apart, and sitting in the twilight within, was the shadowy presence of a man stooping downward, in sorrow or thoughtfulness, as if the position had become habitual.

Cora drew close to her husband, and by the faint light I could see her eyes dilate and darken with excitement. She saw that shadowy presence and struggled forward, pushing impotently at the carriage door with both hands, and crying out—

"My father! my father!"

The shadow gathered itself suddenly up, and opening the window, called out in a low, wild voice:—

"Who calls? who calls? did some one say father?"

The carriage door sprang open, Cora leaped to the ground, sped like a bird up the walk, and disappeared in the porch. Directly, there came a strange sound through the open window—mingled sobs, caresses, and holy fragments of prayer, broken up with gushes of thanksgiving. Morton fell back in the carriage. I saw him cover his face with both hands, and felt that he trembled.

"Heaven forgive me!" he muttered; "heaven forgive me the misery I have caused this good man!"

I was looking toward the parlor. Mr. Clark had fallen back in his chair, and Cora was bending over him. His face was like that of a glorified saint. His lips moved, but gave

forth nothing but broken smiles. Cora fell forward, embracing his knees. Her beautiful face was uplifted like Guido's Hope, but with a shadow of penitent sorrow upon it.

"Father ! father !"

He stooped forward and folded the sweet, tearful face to his bosom, tenderly as the mother hushes her grieved infant.

"Bless thee, oh, my child ! The God of heaven bless thee !"

Faithful to the holy type of Christianity, the good man was ready to forgive with the first breath of concession, even without knowing the extent of her fault.

"Father, you forgive us ; see, it is my husband ; I am very, very happy, father."

Weary with our long journey, and overcome with emotion, Cora flung her arms around that honored neck ; and just as her husband came up, fainted quite away on her father's bosom.

"Give her to me, sir," said Morton, approaching the group, pale and agitated ; "I am her husband, and with her pray your forgiveness."

The young husband faltered ; the good man looked up, with every feature of his face in commotion.

"Take her, then," he said, placing his child in Morton's arms ; "I have only blessings to give—tears and blessings for you both."

Morton carried his wife to the dear old couch of white dimity, which made my heart throb as I looked that way. A few moments restored her to consciousness.

"It is Zana who brings us back—bless Zana, father !" she said, faintly.

"Zana," he exclaimed, bending over me with touching solemnity, and pressing both palms on my head, as in the olden times ; "God bless thee, forever and ever, Zana !"

The very touch of those hands, quivering with joy, was a benediction. His tears fell upon my forehead, the holy tears of a Christian heart broken up with tenderness. I could not speak, but with this new baptism on my brow, entered upon my inheritance.

My inheritance ! yes. We drove to Greenhurst, for such was Lady Catherine's wish, but I would not enter. While the servants were busy receiving her, unconscious of a new mistress, I stole off and flew like a bird to my old home. The moon was up, and I could see my way through the wilderness and across the garden, but here I paused with checked breath, for in the midst, still sheltered by trees and shadowed with vines, stood the cottage, darkened and solitary, as if every living thing had deserted it.

With a heavier tread, I went round the house to our old sitting room. Here a gleam of light stole out upon the vines, and through the window I saw Turner and his wife sitting drearily together. She was looking in his face. His eyes were turned on the blank wall, as if he did not care to receive even her sympathy.

I opened the door and stood within it attempting to speak, but with no power. Maria started up.

"Zana ! Zana !"

I flung myself on her bosom. She smothered me with her kisses, while blessed old Turner stood pleading for one look at my face, that he might be sure it was his child.

We sat up all night. Not once alone, but twenty times, I was forced to repeat the romance I had been living. Over and over again they told me how heartbroken they were when old Jupiter came back with his empty saddle, and bridle trailing in the dust. For weeks old Turner had searched for me. For months he had done nothing but mourn. Jupiter had pined like the rest. My absence had flung everything into shadow.

But I was home again—home again—not for a time, but for all the days of my life—the mistress of Greenhurst and the betrothed wife of Irving. Turner kept repeating this over and over, as he walked up and down the room. He could not realize it. In truth, I think he did not quite admit all the facts to his belief, till he saw me cantering off on Jupiter's back the next morning. Dear old Ju, what a glorious ride we had over the uplands that day !

CHAPTER LVI.

THE OLD TOWER CHAMBER.

It was my bridal morning. I sat within my own pretty chamber, for from the cottage that had been my first shelter, not from the mansion which was only my inheritance, I resolved that Irving should take his bride. For the first time in my life I was clad in pure white. No summer cloud was ever more soft and vapory than the flow of my robe. The bridal veil, crowned by a garland of pale blush roses, fell like a web of exquisite frost-work around me. Pearls gleamed like hail-stones amid the snow of this dress, and a single white rose-bud, hidden in moss, gathered its cloudiness over my bosom.

Cora and my blessed old bonne had done this fairy work, and I was not to see myself till the toilet was complete. At last they led me up to the mirror. As I looked in, a faint pang seized me, for the whiteness of my dress struck inward, and drifts of snow seemed crowding against my heart. A vague dread of some unseen presence brought the old shudder upon me. I looked around in chill apprehension for my mother's face. As I turned, a gush of sunshine came through the pink and white window-curtains, flooding me from head to foot with its rosy glow. I felt the brightness and the warmth. For one instant it seemed to me that my mother's soft eyes looked upon me through the floating haze. My heart swelled again. A smile sprang to my lips. The coldness had forever departed from my bosom. The chill of my mother's death was quenched in the glory of my new life.

The sound of bells sweeping up through the beautiful morning came to my chamber, filling my soul with a sweet tranquil-

lity. On this day began the calm of my life. I went forth garlanded with bridal roses, on which the dew still rested, and with old Turner by my side rode to the church along the road where the wedding of my father and the funeral of his bride had passed by me, a poor gipsy beggar, lying sick and dizzy, with returning life in the open field. I thought of all this with gentle sadness, but it could not reach the heaven in my heart. The iron thread had melted away from the gold of my destiny. The altar was graced with roses that made the air fragrant with their breath, as we knelt before it. Mr. Clark, that day appointed rector of Marston Court, clasped our hands together before it, and sent us forth into the beautiful eternity of our love.

Marston and Cora, the new lord and lady of Marston Court, stood by, regarding us with gentle affection, while lady Catherine, yielding to her own interests, but half reconciled at heart, looked down in sovereign pride on Mr. Turner, from whose hands her high-born son was willing to receive his bride, for who else had the right to give me away?

As we turned from the altar, I saw, at the lower end of the church, the dark face of Chaleco. He was looking at me with a wild, mournful expression, that seemed more sombre from the shadows in which he stood. He answered my smile, which invited him to approach, with a moody wave of the head; but as we went down the aisle, he came toward us."

"Zana," he said, in a hoarse whisper, "if these people wrong you, if in all things they do not regard Aurora's child as a queen, send the ruby earrings to Chaleco. During a few months he will be with his people, and even after he is gone the man or woman who offends you shall feel their vengeance."

"Oh, there will be no need," I answered, regarding my husband with a heart-swell; "but for yourself, Chaleco, my more than friend, for your people—yours and mine, count—remember that a portion of all the wealth you have won for us must each year go to them."

The gipsy count grasped my hand hard, his eyes sparkled, he

uttered a wild blessing in Rommany, and left the church before we could urge him to join us at Greenhurst.

Amid the mellow chime of bells that filled the air with rejoicings—along a path littered with flowers, rained over it by the village children—with the morning lighting up the earth into a paradise, I entered Greenhurst, its mistress, yet scarcely wishing to be that. It was enough and too much happiness for me that I was the wife of its master.

Three months after my wedding-day, I was taken with a sudden desire to visit Marston Court. None of my old habits had been laid aside. I still gloried in a gallop over the uplands on Jupiter who grew young as he undertook these wild rides. My husband was absent, and Lady Catherine now lived entirely at Paris. It was not often that my old restless habits came on, but this day I was haunted with a feeling that some one wanted me at Marston Court. I had been thinking of Chaleco all day, with a degree of anxiety which no reasoning could explain or dispel. These haunting thoughts grew so powerful at last, that I ordered Jupiter to be saddled. Just as I was mounting him, a bit of paper was placed in my hand by a boy. It contained a single sentence :

“Zana, Aurora’s child, come to me.

“CHALECO.”

This message was a relief. It gave a reason for the depressing thoughts that had driven me forth. I put my horse to his speed, never pausing to ask what direction we should take. By this time Marston Court was no longer a picturesque wilderness ; the gardens were almost in order ; the noble trees were free from undergrowth ; the house itself princely. Leaving my horse in the grounds, I walked across the garden to the summer-house, through which the gipsy chief had conducted me from the tower chamber. The mosaic star remained, with its secret undiscovered, in the pavement. I remembered its mechanism, and with a little force wheeled it from the opening

it concealed. The passage was dark, but a little time brought me to a door which opened into the tower.

The chamber was desolate and empty. Ashes lay on the hearth as when we left it that night. The same drapery of cobwebs fell in dusty festoons over the narrow windows, rendering the room at first so dim that I could see no object distinctly. But in an instant I caught the light of two large eyes glaring at me from a corner ; then a pale face, distorted with pain, with the dusky outlines of a human form, reposing on what had once been a magnificent couch. The glow of an old velvet cushion, which still retained gleams of original crimson, was insufficient to give a tinge of color to that pallid face, which seemed the more deathly from contrast with the beard of iron-grey which fell from it, like moss from a blasted tree.

"Zana ! Zana !" said a sharp voice from the couch.

"Chaleco, my friend, my poor friend," I cried, throwing myself on my knees by his couch, and taking his hand, which lay so wet and cold in my clasp, that a sudden fear came upon me that he was dying. "Your hand freezes mine—your whole frame quivers ; what is the matter—what does this terrible prostration mean ?"

"It means," said Chaleco, pointing his finger to a vial that had rolled from his hand half across the floor, where it lay uncorked, with its purple contents oozing drop by drop from the neck—"it means that, like Aurora, Chaleco has fulfilled his oath. That night, Zana, when you lay in Papita's tent, while the rubies burned in her ears with the color of Lady Clare's blood—that night, while the death throes were at her heart, she made me swear an oath that our revenge for Aurora's death should be completed by the overthrow of every living Clare ; that by craft or violence I would wrest away their wealth for our people, and make you—her last of race—a queen at Granada ; or failing, die like a poisoned dog by this hand. As the last death-rattle left her throat she pressed the drao into my palm. Look, you see it yonder dripping like gouts of black blood drop by drop from the vial. From that day I have carried it in my bosom. Zana, Zana ! I have

bought your happiness with my vengeance and my life; now tell me, on your soul—if human beings have souls—are you happy?"

"But for this knowledge—but for your danger—oh, heavens! that it should have been done for me—I am happy, Chaleco."

A smile trembled over his white mouth, he reached forth his quivering hands and, seizing my garments, drew me down to his embrace.

"Live in peace," he said; "her fate is atoned for. It was vengeance on them, or death to myself. I have parted with my people. A new count reigns in my place. I had the choice and wandered back to die with you, Zana."

"Oh, Chaleco, it was a wicked oath; sinful in the taking, doubly sinful in the keeping."

"Hush, Zana, is was that you might live free from Papita's curse."

I looked at him in dismay, the death shadows were gathering on his features.

"You are in great pain. Oh, my friend, is it death?" I questioned.

"Pain! yes, I might have made it the work of an instant, but gave myself time; every moment of your presence I have bought with a pang; but I could not die without you, Zana."

"And must you die—die in this desolate place?" I said, shuddering as his arms loosened and fell from around me.

"I like this best," said Chaleco, rising to one elbow, and casting his glittering eyes around the room. "A Caloe count should not die in the sun's light, while his people grovel in the dark earth. I am but a shadow now, Zana, fast melting away into dark nothingness; this place is fittest."

"Not so, not so, my friend!" I cried, sobbing out the grief I most truly felt; "cast aside these terrible ideas of death—pray to God—let me pray for you. She will help us—Aurora, whom you loved, whom you shall surely see again."

The gipsy began to revive again. The glances of his eyes burned into mine. His frame shook like a dead branch in winter.

"Zana, do you believe this?—do you believe that Aurora lives in—in—anywhere?"

"I do not believe—I *know* it, certainly as I know that the stars burn in heaven, or that the earth is solid under my feet."

His eyes grew brighter and more eager. He turned over, grasping my hands between both his.

"Zana, how am I to reach her? What can I do? Tell me—tell me, before this coldness reaches my heart—tell me, Zana!"

"Pray—pray to God."

"I do not know how," he pleaded; "it is like grasping at mist. What shall I repeat?—which way must I turn?"

The sight of that poor, helpless man would have inspired marble with a spirit of prayer. I was upon my knees; his quivering hands were clasped in mine. I uplifted them to heaven with broken sobs—with tears and a burning eloquence with which no prayer for my own soul had ever yet ascended to heaven.

As I prayed, his hands were softly withdrawn from mine. I paused, and through the agony of my tears saw those poor fingers tremblingly clasp around each other, and uplift themselves. Broken words wavered on his lips. He seemed looking at something afar off in the dim shadows of the room.

"Chaleco!" I cried, in affright.

His hands fell apart and dropped slowly down, touching mine, like ice; his eyes, glazed and fireless, turned upon my face.

"Aurora! Aurora!"

Was it a prayer that Chaleco uttered when he gasped forth my mother's name? I hope so. I believe so.







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